YOGA VASISHTA

in English by **Dr. Ramesam Vemuri**

Based on the original book in Telugu by

BRAHMASRI KUPPA VENKATA KRISHNA MURTY

BOOK 3

UTPATTI PRAKARANA

ORIGINATION

Revised edition 2025

YOGA VASISHTA

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UTPATTI PRAKARANA

ORIGINATION

About the Book

Yoga Vasishta is a treasure house of ancient Indian philosophical wisdom. It offers logical and practical answers to questions like: What is Mind? What is the world? What is the purpose of existence? What is Brahman?
It is a poetic classic by the Sage Valmiki explaining the nature of The Supreme Self expounded in his own inimitable and graceful way as a Discourse between
Maharshi Vasishta and Lord Sri Rama.
The present volume, "Yoga Vasishta"– Book 3 - Utpatti Prakrana - 'Origination' is based on a presentation in Telugu by

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and forms a part of his lectures on "Yoga Vasishta" telecast in Telugu by Gemini TV, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India.

This volume is a rendering of the same into English by

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In it :
The 7000 stanzas of the third chapter on 'Origination' (Utpatti Prakarana) has been ably condensed and lucidly explained in simple words.

The origin of the world was discussed from several perspectives in this chapter in answer to Srirama's request to Sage Vasishta to explain
'Who is it that dies ? Who is it that is born ?, and,
'Who is it that grows and develops' ?.

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Yoga Vasishta

Book 3

ORIGINATION

(Utpatti Prakarana)

AUTHOR'S SUBMISSION

Why does an author keep the core message of his writing hidden deep inside his heart ?

He does so with the hope that the teaching would shine with double the vigor when a reader finally finds it. Because of that reason, he doesn't seal it securely in an iron vault; he only tucks it behind the tender petals of a colorful flower. His wish is that his heart should be accessible– but only to those readers who make a little effort to unravel it. Thus goes the thinking of great writers and poets; and in there lies the inner meaning of their poetic works.

The Celebrated Poet Kalidasa described the Sage Valmiki as the greatest of the spiritual guides. These words are very apt with respect to Yoga Vasishta. The poetic skills of any author may sparkle all by themselves when telling the story of a noble warrior and King like Shri Rama, or in narrating the end of the demon, Ravana. But writing a tome on the theme of a bone dry and abstruse subject like Vedanta with lyrical beauty, extending the text to 32,000 verses without losing the gravity in the discussions or the detail in narration in a gripping manner till the very end bespeaks of the immense capability of the Sage Valmiki. No other writer has attained such levels of excellence to date.

I consider myself blessed. Thanks to the benevolence and grace showered on me by my Gurus, Swami Janardanananda Saraswati and Swami Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda, I could fathom without much of an effort on my part, the depths of Sage Valmiki's heart and his teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta. With the purpose of sharing my understanding with all my fellow-seekers, I began a series of discourses on Yoga Vasishta on Gemini TV.

Inspired by the words of my teachers, I was tempted to investigate the inner meaning of Sage Valmiki's teaching. I was aided in my search by the redoubtable Saint Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati Swami. His voluminous commentary on Yoga Vasishta under the title "tātparyaprakāśa vyākhya" repeatedly helped me in capturing the heights of knowledge disseminated in the text. This gave me the courage to gain the fruits of studying Yoga Vasishta.

Let me first introduce the venerable text Yoga Vasishta.

About Yoga Vasishta:

1. **Author**: Sage Valmiki
2. **Period of writing**: Some time after the completion of his earlier book, Ramayana.
3. **Alternate names** by which this book is known: jnānavāśiṣṭha, vāśiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, ūttara rāmāyaṇa, mahārāmāyaṇa, vāśiṣṭha etc. etc.

4. **Size of the text**: The original text of the *Yoga Vasishta* is traditionally said to comprise 32,000 verses. However, some scholars opine that the actual count may be less than 30,000 (based on the Nirnaya Sagar 1937 Edition). It should be noted that quantifying a work of such a magnitude and intricacy is a complex task. Ultimately, an overly critical investigation into the exact verse count offers little value to the reader in terms of absorbing the text's spiritual message.
5. **Subject matter**: Inquiry into the Supreme Self. It comprises the teaching given to the 12 year old prince Rama by the Sages Vishwamitra and Vasishta. The book establishes that the man enlightened by the wisdom of knowing the highest truth will be able to function with excellence in this world.
6. **The style of Narration and other specialtie**s:

- The gist of each topic to be discussed is summarized upfront.
- The subject is illustrated through a captivating story.
- The symbolical significance of the characters used in the stories is explained by the author himself.
- The object of the text is not about the denying or contradicting any other theories.
- There are no polemic debates.
- The author raises a number of questions from various angles and answers them himself.
- Though the subject matter is that of tough Vedanta, one can see the poetic skills of the author at innumerable instances.
- The text is full of unimaginable metaphors that capture the reader's heart.
- The dominant Sanskrit meter used in this composition is *Anustup Chandas*, a rhythmic structure traditionally employed in spiritual texts. According to the rules of this meter, each *sloka* consists of 32 syllables. In this context, it is interesting to consider the mystery and significance of the number 32 in Sanskrit literature and Hindu philosophy. The number 32 represents completeness, a set of significant spiritual principles, or a state of divine order and balance. While the *Anustup* meter prevails, Sage Valmiki also employs other meters to suit specific contextual nuances within the work.

7. **Abridged Versions:**

- As the text is quite voluminous, many condensed versions of the book have been prepared both in the Northern and Southern parts of India. Some of the more popular versions are:
- The text by the Kashmiri Pundit Abhinandana comprising 6,000 verses.
- The text by Shri Swami Vidya Prakasananda Giri, Head of the Shukabrahma Ashram, Kalahasti having 8,000 verses.

8. **Translations:** Translations of the text are available in almost all languages. There are six translations in Telugu language itself -- five in prose form and one as verses. I consulted all these books in my work and I am indebted to those authors. Out of these, the translation by Shri M. Subbaraya Sharma was particularly helpful to me.

9. **Expert views:** Yoga Vasishta is highly revered not only during the old historical times, but also in modern days by the spiritual teachers.

   For example:
   - Swami Ramatirtha described Yoga Vasishta as the "most wonderful" text.

- The book is highly revered by the Malayala Swami, The Head of the Erpedu Vyasa Ashram.
- Yoga Vasishta is acclaimed as the foremost amongst the books on Advaita by the Head of Gayatri Peetha.

10. Structure of Yoga Vasishta:

There are six chapters in the text.

- *Vairāgyaprakaraṇa* -- On Detachment -- 1,500 verses -This first chapter describes in detail the feelings of detachment experienced by Shri Rama.
- *Mumukśu Vyavahāra Prakaraṇa* – On the Conduct of a spiritual Aspirant -- 1,000 verses. This second chapter gives the details of the basic qualities to be attained by a spiritual aspirant. The importance of human effort in achieving liberation is discussed and it has been established that it is necessary that an effort should be made to obtain liberation.
- *Utpattiprakaraṇa* – On Origination -- 7,000 verses –This third chapter examines the reality of the visible world and if it has been created at all.
- *Sthitiprakaraṇa* – On Sustenance -- 3,000 verses – This fourth chapter investigates how the apparent world is sustained.
- *Upaśamaprakaraṇa* – On the Calm Down -- 5,000 verses - This fifth chapter talks of the method of obtaining a tranquil mind through True Knowledge.
- *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa* – On Liberation -- 14,500 verses –This sixth and the final chapter is the largest wherein the achievement of Liberation is discussed thoroughly. It is divided into two parts - *Pūrvārdha and Uttarārdha*.

11. **Commentaries:** It is said that there are many commentaries in Sanskrit on YogaVasishta. However, only "tātparyaprakāśikā" by Swami Ananda Bhodhendra Saraswati is available in print. It was published by the NirnayaSagar Press in 1937. This commentary has received accolades from many learned pundits.

About Author Valmiki: It is opined by some experts that the author Valmiki of Yoga Vasishta was different from the author Valmiki of Ramayana. One group of such people belong to those that are opposed to Non-dualist philosophy. Their main concern is only to deprecate the importance of Yoga Vasishta as it is an unrivalled text on Non-duality. The other group contends that an evaluation on the authorship is called for using modern techniques rather than going by the word of tradition. Let us examine critically the various arguments advanced by this group.

The writing style of both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta is about the same. In fact, no critic has been able to point out any major differences. However, some of these critics ask why there is not even a hint made about Yoga Vasishta in Ramayana. The answer to this question is available right in the first chapter of Yoga Vasishta. One may take a look.

The second argument is that because we find reference to Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna, Arjuna, Sage Suka and others in Yoga Vasishta, it should belong to a period later than that of Bhagavad-Gita. But if we keep in mind the caliber and skill of a writer who could handle a complex and intricate subject as Advaita Vednata with such a dexterity as found in the book, it is unlikely that we will be persuaded to conclude that such an enlightened and exceptionally competent author belonging to a later period would have tried to create a false impression about the date of his work. Hence, it is untenable to argue that it belongs to the post-Bhagavad-Gita period.

A question may, however, arise about the reference to the events of later eons (*yuga*) in the text. But inclusion of a reference to the events that are likely to take place at a future date is quite typical of the Sage Valmiki. He did so in his other and more popular work, Ramayana too. In fact, in the Balakanda of Ramayana, his narration cuts across past, present and future times in the description of different events. Sage Valmiki resorts to this type of narrating the future in uttarakanda of Ramayana also. Thus the narration of future events as seen by him through clairvoyance is a characteristic of the Sage Valmiki. It is no wonder that we find examples of such descriptions of future events in Yoga Vasishta also. In fact, whenever a future event is described, the author raises a question through one of the characters in the book about the chronological inconsistency and a suitable reply is given right there. Readers familiar with the works of other great Seers and Sages do not find this style of writing odd at all. For example, we find future events being narrated at a current time in Agastya Samhita. Sage Vyasa authored an entire purana which describes the future events only.

Thus when viewed with an unbiased eye, it is inevitable to conclude that the author of Yoga Vasishta and Ramayana was one and the same poet.

Further, we have to note that the Sage Valmiki was not only a writer *par excellence*, but also a great Maharishi. The word 'Rishi' in Sanskrit means the one who realized the ultimate Truth (*tatva*). A true writer is one who can speak accurately. Because he has both these qualities, he could write with such a depth of understanding and beauty. We notice several instances of this signature style of the Sage in both Ramayana and Yoga Vasishta.

I studied and tried to decipher the core message of Yoga Vasishta and the commentaries on it with the same spirit. I took help from elders, prayed to my teachers, and also consulted the teachings of Shri Janardanananda Swami who was not only a noble saint but also happened to be my father before his renunciation of the world. What I could understand is presented by me in my discourses that were telecast by the Gemini TV and the same is now offered in the form of a text. That is the reason it is called as the 'heart' of Yoga Vasishta.

We find a variation in spelling of the name of the Sage Vasishta. It is written in the Devanagari script both as Vaśiṣṭha and Vasiṣṭha. Both ways are correct as the former spelling is derived to mean as the one who conquered his senses and the latter one means the one who excelled as a householder.

Sage Vasishta himself clarified that writing his name either way was acceptable as quoted in a verse in Mahabharata (Canto 13, Chapter 63, verse 96). I adopted 'Vaśiṣṭha' in my writings as it would emphasize the importance of control, over the senses which is an important requisite in the study of Vedanta.

Acknowledgements:

All words are inadequate to express my indebtedness to my Teacher, Swami Ganapati Sachchidnananda. Therefore, I dedicate this work to him. I am also grateful to Gemini TV for telecasting my discourses. I tried to present the teaching contained in Yoga Vasishta in a logical manner and with a modern idiom. Please condone any omissions or commissions. However, my request to the readers is that this presentation should not be treated to be a condensation or abridgement of the original text. It is an effort to capture the "core" message and please study it in that spirit.

I am only nominally there in delivering this message. The inner sentient principle that motivates, acts and speaks is different. I pray to my Gurus to channel the Grace of that inexplicable principle to all in experientially realizing It.

Salutations to the Gurus.

Kuppa Venkata Krishna Murthy

1. Introduction

Sage Vasishta, an exemplary teacher that he was, had been imparting his teaching to Rama according to a well thought out plan. After *vairāgya prakaraṇa* and *mumukśu vyavahāra prakaraṇa,* the first and the second chapters respectively in Yoga Vasishta*,* the Sage took up the third chapter, '*utpatti prakaraṇa.'* The origin of the world was discussed from several perspectives in this chapter.

Towards the end of the second chapter Sri Rama asked:

तदेतद्भगवन्ब्रूहि किमिदं परिणश्यति ।
किमिदं जायते भूयः किमिदं परिवर्धते ।।

tadetadbhagavanbrūhi kimidaṃ pariṇaśyati |
kimidaṃ jāyate bhūyaḥ kimidaṃ parivardhate ||

Vairagya Prakarana, Sarga 12, Sloka 17

Revered Sir, please explain who is it that dies, who is it that is born and who is it that grows and develops.

In reply to the question, Maharshi Vasishta stated:

उत्पादयते यो जगति स एव किल वर्धते
स एव मोक्शमाप्नोति स्वर्गम् व नरकम् च व

utpādayate yo jagati sa eva kila vardhate
sa eva mokśamāpnoti svargam va narakam ca va

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 7

Whoever it is that is born will grow. Only he will attain heaven or hell or liberation.

But what exactly does it mean 'to be born' ? The seven thousand verse strong chapter on *utpatti* provides the answer to the question. The chapter is like a huge maze. We often miss what direction it takes and where it leads us to. It appears very confusing. Maharshi Vasishta, hence provided us with a summary of the chapter right in the beginning. He called it appropriately as *sangraha sarga* – The summary canto.

इदं प्रकरणार्थं त्वं संक्षेपाच्छृणु राघव ।
ततः संकथयिष्यामि विस्तरं ते यथेप्सितम् ।।

idaṃ prakaraṇārthaṃ tvaṃ saṃkṣepācchṛṇu rāghava |
tataḥ saṃkathayiṣyāmi vistaraṃ te yathepsitam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 9

I shall first give you a summary of the chapter and expand it later on.

In spite of the canto summarizing the chapter, one finds the subject matter very counter-intuitive and difficult to follow. Therefore, we shall adopt a different approach in order to comprehend the subject matter of the discourse properly.

2. Space and Time

Maharshi Vasishta tells us in this chapter that there is no such thing as birth (*utpatti*) at all ! This position can hardly be convincing to anyone. If you take any object in the world, you can definitely say that the object originated or formed at so and so place and at such and such a time. We can also say that it did not exist before that time.Thus we can locate its origin in a Four Dimensional space-time plot.

The three axes x,y, and z of the graph determine the location of the object in Space. In Vedantic parlance, space is called '*deśa.*' The fourth axis, namely the t-axis, will fix the time of birth. In Vedantic parlance, time is called '*kāla.*' The four axes together fix the object's origin in the 4-D space-time. Though it may sound very modern to think in terms of the 4-D graph, the ancient seers in India were quite familiar with this concept and often used it in their work.

In order to understand clearly, one has to remember the x, y, and z axes whenever the word '*deśa* or location in space' is mentioned and t-axis whenever the word '*kāla* or time' is mentioned. It will then be easy to follow the logic of Sage Vasishta without any difficulty.

The Sage raises a revolutionary and fundamental question here: "In order to find the location of a point or object, you may take the help of the four axes; but what is the basis in locating the origin for these axes?"

There is no answer to this question in mathematics. The point of origin, 'O', of the axes is taken axiomatically. Axiom means that it is a self-evident truth. It is accepted with no further discussion over it. It is this point on which Maharshi focuses his discussion. He questions: 'Where is the point of origin for these four axes? What is its locus? '

The discussion with regard to the above question takes many twists and turns. Ultimately the sage demonstrates that such a point as 'O' does not exist at all ! Moreover, he impresses that it is simply a belief that 'O' exists. In other words, its existence is imagined. It is an illusion. Believing in its existence, you draw certain coordinates and call them 'Axes.' Based on these axes you fix the point of origination and fix the three directions in space. The entire edifice of origin or birth is thus built based on your illusion, but not on any really existing point. Hence, there is no such thing as origination or creation. That forms the sum and substance of Maharshi's teaching.

The Sage does not use the term axis. As per his terminology, they are *deśa* and *kāla*, space and time. He says that neither space nor time is existent ! (From here onwards whenever the word space appears, it is to be understood as *deśa* or vice versa).

Can we imagine a situation without space and time? It is impossible for us. The Sage presents such counter-intuitive concepts in this chapter. In order to make it easy for us, he tells the story called 'Leela *upakhyāna*,' also called '*ṃandapa upakhyāna.*' He begins the actual story in the 15th*sarga*. The preceding 14 *sarga*-s to it give the theoretical framework of the story based exclusively on logic. Hence we may say that the first 14 *sarga*-s are of an introductory nature for the story '*Leelopakhyāna*.' The first *sarga* briefly explains the concept. Hence, it is also called *sangraha sarga*, (The summary canto).

3. When did creation happen ?

Maharshi Vasishta begins his discourse in response to the query by Rama – How and when did the creation take place? But who could have seen the beginning of creation? How is one to be sure of any claim made over it? The origination is something that none could have witnessed. It cannot be a matter of belief also. One has to inquire into it by oneself and find out. Therefore, the Sage suggests a new approach.

You perceive the world in the now. So it undoubtedly exists in the now. You saw a world in your dream. It existed then during your dream. What happened to the dream world? It dissolved into the *suṣupti* (deepsleep) state. Likewise, the world you see in your wakeful state will dissolve at the end of the present *kalpa* or aeon.

When the dream world is absorbed into *suṣupti* what remains? Only you remain. Similarly, when the wakeful world dissolves at the end of the *kalpa*, there remains one Real Thing called '*satpadārdha*.'

You remained after your dream ended. What is your nature compared to your dream world ? Are you made up of the five elements of the dream world? Are you the illuminating light in the dream or are you its darkness? Nothing of the dream world can be attributed to you. You are distinct from it from any angle. But, you exist after the dream world dissolves.

ततह् स्तिमित गम्भीरम् न तेजो न तमस्ततम्
अनाख्यमनभिव्यक्तम् सत्किन्द्धसिश्यते

tatah stimita gambhīram na tejo na tamastatam
anākhyamanabhivyaktam satkincdvasiśyate

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 1, Sloka 11

Similarly, the sole 'remaining entity' after the dissolution of the wakeful world, cannot be anything that belongs to the awake world. It cannot be the light or darkness of the wakeful world. It cannot be a thing born of the five elements of the awake world. It has to be something which is not cognized in the wakeful world. Whether the wakeful world exists or not, that 'remaining entity' should be existing. In other words, it has to be a truly existing entity or '*satpadārdha*.' Our ancient savants called that Real thing which is ever-existent by various names such as *ṛita* (Truth); *ātma* (Self); *para* (Supreme); *brahman* (Pervading); *śāstra* (Definite). As a matter of fact It has no name and It is unnameable!

The Real thing, in course of time owing to indiscretion, becomes an individual. The name given to him is 'ḥiranyagarbha.' The reason for the indiscretion is *avidya*–nescience or ignorance. It is simply mentation. It is the material cause for the origination of Hiranyagarbha and, later on, the world.

Knowledgeable elders gave many names to the mentation like: *avidya* (individual ignorance); *samskriti* (worldliness); *bandha* (bondage); *māyā* (cosmic ignorance), *tamas* (inertia or indolence).

4. *māyā* is 'Plus'

It is said that the Pure Real Thing became Hiranyagarbha or Brahma due to illusion or *avidya*. It is also mentioned that illusion binds Hiranyagarbha. We will shortly see very elaborate philosophical discussions on *avidya*. Let us try to understand what *avidya* is from a modern perspective.

Everyone knows the mathematical symbol 'plus'(+). We use it often in our work. We are so much used to it that we introduced it even into linguistics in statements like

Do +not = Don't.

What exactly does '+' mean ? What is its function in an equation ? Let us examine -

The '+' sign is called an arithmetic operator. It stands for addition. What exactly does

the sign '+' do?

For example, let us say that there is one banana. I place another banana next to it. Then we can express it in the form:

1 + 1

The formulation introducing '+' has not brought to bear any change upon the first banana or on the second banana.

Next we write the equation:

1 + 1 = 2

How could we formulate the above equation balancing the left hand and right hand sides ? Where did the numeral '2' get generated? The two '1's representing the first banana and the second banana on which '+' has no effect, obviously, could not have generated '2'.

So the numeral '2' must have been generated by the sign '+'.

But '+' by itself all alone cannot generate '2'. It can generate '2' only when it comes in- between the two 1s.

It happens so because, though the '+' sign has no effect on any of the 1s (called the operands), it has an effect on the 'mind' of the person doing the operation (calculation).

The symbol '+' produces the image of the numeral '2' in the mind of the person carrying out the calculation.

'2' appears clearly as a numeral. How can we say that '2' is imagined in the mind?

If '2' is really an entity and not an imagination, it should relate to something or the other. But in the equation we have written, '2' is related to neither the first nor the second operand. When the two bananas came together next to each other, the idea of '2' got generated in the mind of the person. Therefore, the number two is an idea only. When we expressed the idea as a numeric character and scripted it, it appeared as '2'.

The long and short of it is that the number 'two' is only an imagined idea. The idea of two gets generated in the mind of an observer from the idea of '+' sign. Therefore, we have to admit that the idea of 'plus' is also resident in the observer's mind only.

The bananas are on the table. They form one set (shown in red). The idea of '+' and the number '2' are in the mind of the observer. They form another set (shown in blue).

[1 1] — The **red set** on the table.

[+ 2] — The **blue set** in the mind.

We mix up these two sets and write down the equation:

1 + 1 = 2

In order to find the locus of the force responsible for causing the mixing up of both the sets, let us examine the position prior to the origination of the idea of '2'.

There were two distinct entities, namely the bananas and the mind. Bananas qua

bananas and mind qua mind. They were not related to one another and were completely independent of each other. Only after the introduction of the symbol '+', the mix up in the two sets has arisen. Hence, we have to conclude that the locus of the power causal for the mix up rests in the sign '+'. Thus, the concept of '+' has caused two things:

i) Though it existed in the mind of the observer, it appeared 'as though' it was related to the 'things' being observed;

ii) It engendered the idea of the number '2' in the mind of the observer, but it falsely projected the sense that the number existed in the things external to the mind.

Such false projections, when encountered in the world, are described as illusions, magic or jugglery. The simple arithmetic calculation is a very common example of such an 'illusion' that we come across all the time in our daily life.

Now, applying the above logic, we are ready to formulate the expression for creation on the lines of 1 +1 = 2.

5. Beingness + thought = Hiranyagarbha (Creator)

Just as '+' does not affect the first or the later '1', *mAyA* too does not affect Beingness or thought.

The symbol '+' is not any entity. So also *mAyA* is also not an entity.

Just like '+' creates the idea of '2' in the mind of the observer but projects it on to the things which are outside the mind, *māyā* too creates the idea of a Creator in the mind of the seer and projects Him to be somewhere over there beyond one's own mind.

The imaginary Hiranyagarbha creates further imaginary worlds.

Thus we can see that *māyā* in Vedanta is not unlike the 'plus' symbol in mathematics. So those who feel intimidated by the word *mAyA*, can understand it better when they think of it in terms of the plus sign being used daily.

Maharshi Vasishta explains in the first *sarga* that the creation of the world is also an illusion in the mind of the seer.

The explanation given above, though very logical, doesn't appear to be fully convincing. The Maharishi is aware of this fact. Though he gave a detailed exposition in the preceding twelve *sarga*-s, he reveals the real implication of it in the 13th *sarga*. So we shall study the 13th *sarga* first and then go back to the earlier *sarga*-s. By this way we will be able to understand the subject matter better.

In the 1st *sarga*, the Maharshi said:

1. To start with there was only the Real Thing (*satpadārdha*).
2. Because of its contact with *māyā*, a remnant thought arose in it.
3. As a result, the first individual, Hiranyagarbha was born. He created the subsequent worlds.

4. The *māyā* which is causal for the birth of Hiranyagarbha is related to the minds of all the beings in the creation.

   Expressing the above in mathematical terms,

   Real Thing + Thought = Hiranyagarbha.

The locus for the 'plus' in the above equation is the seer's mind.

Here, who is the seer? We are the seers. Then, the inference will be that *mAyA*, residing in our minds, has created the creator. It looks absurd. Doesn't it ? It seems more reasonable to say that the creator with some *māyā* has created us, but not the other way around. This is the totally confusing point on which clarity has to emerge.

6. The King from the Dream

Maharshi Vasishta solves the above puzzle in the 13th *sarga*. He asks us to take up a 'Thought Experiment.'

He says: "Imagine you had a dream. You were a King in your dream. You were the ruler of your land. There were temples, Gods, people, the sky, stars and all sorts of things in your Kingdom. From where did the Kingdom, the people and all other things there come? We have to agree that all the people and the things in the dream world came from you who were sleeping.

Imagine that you, as the King in the dream world, were wondering about the creation. You were thinking about how the world you were in came about. But before you could get an answer, you woke up. You remember all the details of the dream – the dream King, the dream country, the thinking of the dream King etc. Suppose by some magic, the King in the dream appears before you and asks you: "Sir, how did our dream world originate?" What would be your answer?

Obviously, you will tell him that the entire creation happened in your own mind and there was no creation anywhere other than that.

Then the King from the dream asks you about the dimensions of your mind. Relative to the size of the huge world that appeared in your dream, the size of your mind would be a miniscule. You will answer him accordingly. The dream King was not convinced. He will ask you how the vast dream world which extended to millions of miles could fit within the miniscule size of your mind. What will then be your answer to him?

You say to him: "My Friend! However huge you may say your world was, neither you nor your Kingdom really exist. It is entirely your imagination. And so is your long history. All of it happened in a jiffy within my mind. The three dimensional space you have seen and also the dimension of time that you experienced are both unreal. There is no truth in them."

But the dream King persists: "How can you say so, Sir ? If both the space and time in my world were to be non-existent, how can I be there ? I saw with my own eyes and I experienced the things by myself. Don't you remember seeing me in your dream ? You yourself saw me and my world. You remember that well. In spite of that you deny my existence and that of my world. Is it justified? "

In your reply, you would admit that you did see him and his world. You would also agree that you remember the experience. Yet, you would insist that he as well as his world were unreal. You will add: “I deny your existence now because your vast world extending to several millions of miles was born out of my miniscule mind. It lived in my mind and dissolved back into my mind. The long history of your world had happened within a few seconds in my mind.

Say, you take a small particle of your world and drill a hole in it. Pass your finger through the hole. If you feel the presence of a large cave in that hole, will you believe it or will you let it go as no more than a wild imagination? In spite of the ‘feel’ of the presence of a huge space within the particle, you will reject the idea as absurd, because such vast spaces cannot exist within a tiny hole of a minute particle. The reason for me to deny your existence is the same. I saw the vast dream world within a small part of my mind. As long as I was seeing it, it did not occur to me that it had come out of my mind. So I believed it to be real at that time. You also believed it to be real and you continue to be real even now. But I have understood now that the dream world had its origin in a miniscule part of my mind, it had its life there and it dissolved back into my mind. Once I realized the truth, I do not believe in the reality of the dream anymore. But you have not yet obtained the knowledge. Hence you are unable to give up the idea that it was a real world.”

After listening to you with full attention, the King from the dream thinks for a while. He does not feel satisfied. The conversation proceeds as follows:

Dream King: Sir, many countries, hills, rivers, oceans, wind, space and several other things are present in my world. From where did all these originate ? Millions of people also live there. In addition there are many other living and non-living entities. How are they born ?

Yourself: Dear King! Everything, whether animate or inanimate, in your world are me only. They were born from me and again got absorbed into me.

Dream King: You say you created everything. Where did you get the raw materials for the creation ?

Yourself: The thing that was present was my mind only. There is no question of raw materials or procuring them from somewhere. My mind by itself created the entire dream world. There was no other help.

Dream King: Your mind is a sentient substance. It looks reasonable to say that animate things of my world were born from your mind. But how am I to accept that the inanimate things of my world also were born from your sentient mind?

Yourself: One could inquire into the origin of animate and inanimate things if the world they are in is a real one. The enormous world that appeared within a particle of my mind is itself a huge unreality. Neither the animate nor the inanimate things in the dream world are true. It is not any surprise if objects arise as mere imaginary projections in my sentient mind. After all, you can create many wonders with your imagination!

DreamKing: (After thinking for a while): You came to realize the unreality of my world after you woke up from your dreamstate. But think of the position of millions of people in my world before you woke up. What was their condition then?

Yourself: (In a compassionate tone): My dear King! I have to tell you the truth. The minds of the millions of the creatures in your world put together constitute my composite mind. In fact, the minds of all the beings in your world together form only a tiny part of me. I am also the composite of all the inert things in your world. The sum total of the composites of the sentient and insentient things of your world together still will be only a small part of me.

The things in your world do not have reality even at the time you experience them. If it were to really exist, it would not have been possible for such an enormous world and its things to be present within a small part of my mind. From your point of view, I am your creator. I am the ruler of your world. And I am also the locus wherein your world dissolves. But from my point of view, you are me. Your enemy is also me. Your thoughts are me. The thoughts of your enemy are also me.

Let's say that I am A, you are B and your enemy is C. For me,

A = B
A = C.

Then it follows:

B = C.

So in my opinion, all the lives in your world are only one.

If you can understand this clearly, you will know that you are not different from me. You, your world, all the people and all the things therein are me only. You and the things in your world have no existence apart from me. If they seem to be different, it is merely an illusion.

The appearance of distinct countries, people, lands, sentient things, inert things, time, space and the entire lot is nothing but an illusion. If you can get over the illusion through a thorough inquiry, you will find that there is no separate world of yours, no distinct space, time, and no different animate and inanimate things etc. When I say that there is no separate world of yours, what I mean is that it has no 'Beingness' separate from me. Realization of this Truth is liberation for you.

7. Dream King to You = You to Hiranyagarbha

Is the above teaching wrong in any way? We can say absolutely not.

Let's go to the next step.

Think of Hiranyagarbha, your Creator. What you were to your dream world, Hiranyagarbha is to your wakeful world. The entire system of the worlds, stars, galaxies and everything that can be imagined by you exists within a minuscule part of Hiranyagarbha's mind. Apply the teaching you gave to the dream King to yourself. Your three dimensional world, its movement along the arrow of time, and all the things in it are within the center of an atomic size particle of Hiranyagarbha's mind. Does that world and the things in it have any reality ? If you say yes, it amounts to admitting your dream to be real. Obviously it is not true. Therefore, realize that all your experiences of time and space and everything of your world are unreal like the dream. When you understand the above, every form appearing in the awake state is only a modulation of Hiranyagarbha.

As per the logic that given A=B and A=C, then B=C that we cited above, it will be evident that all the beings in the wakeful world are one entity only. But we do not find it to be so in our daily experience. It is so because we believe that space and time are real and they truly exist, like the Dream King in your dream thought that he and his kingdom are real. Consequently, we think that we are different from our neighbors. Such thinking is obviously wrong. The separation is merely an imagination. If you get over the illusion, there is no scope for differentiating one from the other. That is liberation.

The question that comes up next is how did the creation come up from

Hiranyagarbha. It arose in the same way as did the dream world from you. There was no change in you prior to the arising of the dream. Some impressions left over from your past actions got activated in you. They brought about a change in you. Immediately the wonderful dream world was created. The causal factors for the creation of the dream world were 'You' + past impressions. What does the plus sign stand for ? As we discussed earlier, it is *mAyA*. What is the locus for *mAyA* and whom does it veil ? If there is no separate person in the dream world, we have to agree that *mAyA* does not have any Beingness. If there is a separate individual in the dream, (s)he cannot be anyone different from you, the one who is real. This fact has already been established twice. We have to accept that the locus for *mAyA* is the individual in the dream, who, in turn, has no separate existence from the real you.

You existed before *māyā*'s appearance and you continue to exist after its disappearance. Therefore, it is not possible to say that the *māyā* veils you. Yet *māyā'*s existence depends on the individual in the dream. But he is not different from you.

Hence, it may not be wrong to say that the *māyā* is dependent on you. Thus *māyā* is dependent on you in one sense and is not dependent on you from another view point. Such an odd situation becomes possible because *māyā* does not actually exist.

When *māyā* does not really exist, what reason is there for us to get into such an elaborate discussion on it ? *māyā* is a much debated technical matter in Vedanta involving highly complex terminology. Let us examine the issue from another angle in order to get a deeper understanding.

We have already talked about the mathematical operator 'plus.' Is it a real thing or merely an imaginary entity ? If it is just an imagination, the entire field of mathematics will crumble like a cookie. No transactions in the world would be possible without it. If 'plus' were to be a real thing, then whenever it is used, there should be a change in the concerned objects. But that does not happen. Therefore, neither can we say that 'plus' is a real thing nor can we say that it is an unreal thing. *māyā* is similar to the 'plus.'

We tend to view things in the world generally either as black or white. If a thing is true, it has to be true. If it is false, it has to be false. Such a neat classification does not work in the case of plus, *māyā,* imagination etc. Hence these things are put under a new group called '*mithya*.' *mithya* is neither true nor false. It is neither real nor unreal. It is neither existent nor non-existent. In Sanskrit, it is described as '*sadasadvilakśaṇa*'.

When the pure you are associated with a past impression, the dream world is suddenly created due to *māyā*. Likewise, the first individual – Hiranyagarbha – formed due to *māyā* when the pure Reality got associated with a thought. Hiranyagarbha created the world. Hiranyagarbha is for you and the other beings in your world, the same as what you are to the creatures in your dream. Just as you are not different from the individuals in your dream, you and the others in the awake world are not different from Hiranyagarbha. Realizing this 'non- difference' (*abheda*) is liberation to your dream person as well as to you.

Perceiving the difference is the cause for the absence of *mokśa* for the dream King. The dream King perceives a difference because of his belief in the reality of space and time in his world. Similarly, you feel bound because you also believe in the reality of space and time of your wakeful world.

Therefore, Rama, give up the assumption that space and time that appear to you are real. When that belief goes, the question on the origin of the world will also go away.

आकाश एव परमे प्रथमः प्रजेशो

नित्यं स्वयं कचति शून्यतया समो यः ।
स ह्यातिवाहिकवपुर्नतु भूतरूपी
पृथ्व्यादि तेन न सदस्ति यथा न जातम् ।।

ākāśa eva parame prathamaḥ prajeśo
nityaṃ svayaṃ kacati śūnyatayā samo yaḥ |
sa hyātivāhikavapurnatu bhūtarūpī
pṛthvyādi tena na sadasti yathā na jātam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 13, Last Sloka

Hiranyagarbha is born within the Supreme Self. Hiranyagarbha had no form. The Supreme Self, who is universally existent in all, shines as the formless Hiranyagarbha.

Hiranyagarbha has a subtle body (*ātivāhika deha*). His body comprises his mind only. There is no physical body for him. The five fundamental elements are born from Hiranyagarbha through his mentation (thought process). Hence the five elements and the subsequent products arising out of them like the gross worlds do not have reality. They lack Beingness. They are not really born. They are like the horns of a rabbit. That in brief has been my teaching thus far."

Maharshi Vasishta concluded the 13th *sarga* with the above explanation.

We jumped from the first *sarga* to the thirteenth. The Sage stated in the first *sarga* that Hiranyagarbha was born because of the contact with *māyā* and it is Hiranyagarbha who created the world. The intention for saying so along with the supporting evidence for the statement are presented by him in the 13th *sarga*. He, however, presented the different names given to the Real Thing and *māyā* in the first *sarga*. He also said in the first sarga that what was 'seen' to be present external to oneself was actually contained within the 'seer' himself. These things are further explained in the 13th *sarga*.

The Sage discussed from various angles the very same issues in great detail in the eleven *sarga*-s (from the 2nd to the 12th.). Maharshi narrated a short story to illustrate his point in the 2nd *sarga*. It is the story of *ākāśaja,* 'the one born to space.'

8. Story of *ākāśaja*

Once there lived a Brahmin (a person born in a higher caste) by name *ākāśaja*. one born to space. *ākāśaja* also means one who descended directly from the Supreme Self, i.e. Hiranyagarbha. The name *ākāśaja* could also mean the one, who was not born at all.

ākāśaja was a very righteous person. He observed many austerities. As a result he did not die in spite of having lived for many many years. He was in Satyaloka (The world of Brahma). On seeing him, the God of Death became very curious. He thought "I have been able to take the lives of many but not of this Brahmin. I should find out the reason." So the God of Death proceeded to *Satyaloka*. But he did not have the entry permit to get inside the Satyaloka. He faced a wall of fire surrounding Satyaloka preventing him from going in. The fire began to engulf him and burn him when he forced himself in. Nevertheless, he fought with determination and crossed the wall of fire. He could finally enter the Satyaloka.

On finding *ākāśaja*, he created hundreds of arms for himself. He tried to overpower *ākāśaja* with all his might. But he failed miserably. He could not catch *ākāśaja* in spite of his hundreds of hands. *ākāśaja* was clearly visible to him and did not even attempt to escape from him. *ākāśaja* did not resist the efforts made by the God of Death to capture him.

Yet God was unable to tackle him. The God of Death developed cold feet. He went to

Lord Yama and asked him the reason for his inability to capture *ākāśaja.*

Lord Yama replied: "God of Death! You are undoubtedly very capable. But you cannot function all by yourself. You need help from the effects of the actions done by an individual so that you can capture him and end his life. Otherwise you cannot succeed. Your mistake with regard to *ākāśaja* was that you have not taken into account the effect of his actions. Go and find out the resultant effects of his past actions and then try to take him on."

God of Death realized his mistake and went to investigate the actions done by *ākāśaja.* He could not find any in spite of an intense search. So, he returned to Lord Yama and reported his inability to locate the effects of the actions done by *ākāśaja.*

He confessed that he could not fathom how*ākāśaja* performed his action in so much secrecy that no effects could be located. He requested Lord Yama for help.

Lord Yama pondered for a while whether to respond to the God of Death or not. He finally said to him out of mercy:

"God of Death! *ākāśaja* is born from the Supreme Self. The Supreme Self is space. Whoever is born to space will be space only. Can there be any action for space? Is it possible for the son of a barren woman to take any action ? Can there be a son to a barren woman? Can a tree originate in (empty) space ? So, *AkAshaja* does not act nor has he any association with any action.

You may argue that *ākāśaja* has a body which separates him from Hiranyagarbha. But the important point is that it is you who perceives the distinction between the two. *ākāśaja* himself does not see any difference. *ākāśaja* had not performed any actions or piled up any karma in the past. He is not doing anything now also. He does not entertain any wish (*samkalpa*). He never even thinks that he is born. Hence he does not get the idea that he would die. If he thought of death at any time even once, even for a second, he would have become your prey. He never had such thoughts. His body, his separate life etc. are all present in your perception only. He does not have them. Hence his form is just open space. One cannot tie space with ropes, however strong one may be. You can never catch him. So stop your attempts to take on *ākāśaja*."

After listening to the reply from Lord Yama, the God of Death posed another question: "Sir, space is just void, it has no form. How can *ākāśaja* with a definite shape be born from void space? Further, how could the five fundamental elements having a clear form come from the formless one? It appears impossible to me. Yet we experience the five elements as if they are real. So please tell me whether the five elements really exist or not."

Lord Yama replied:

न कदाचन जातोऽसौ न च नास्ति कदाचन ।
द्विजः केवलविज्ञानभामात्रं तत्तथा स्थितः ।।

na kadācana jāto'sau na ca nāsti kadācana |
dvijaḥ kevalavijñānabhāmātraṃ tattathā sthitaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 2, Sloka 35

God of Death ! Who do you think *ākāśaja* is ? He is Hiranyagarbha himself. He was never born. Yet he is ever existent. He exists as knowingness. So he is there forever and shall remain so.

After the great Dissolution, when the entire world was absorbed into the Supreme Self, the cumulated ignorance of all the individuals in the world caused the appearance of a huge luminous form within the unchanging Supreme Self. The individuals like you and me who saw that brilliance thought it to be some objective entity. Carried away by that thought, they named it as Hiranyagarbha, *ākāśaja*, Brahma, The Four-faced one, Virat and so on. The truth is that there is actually nothing with a form (entity) existing there. The reason for the arising of the illusory form is the cumulative 'ignorance' of all the creatures belonging to the previous creation who are in an absorbed state within the Supreme Self. If that ignorance gets dissolved, Hiranyagarbha will not retain even the illusory form anymore.

Would such an entity have anything to do with actions? Would he be related to the thought forms or the five fundamental elements ? When there is nothing at all to be related, how can the five fundamental elements like the earth, water, fire, wind and space originate from him?

So, O' God of Death ! You are correct. These five elements are not really existing. This Hiranyagarbha or *ākāśaja* does not have any relationship with anyone. Hence, you can never take him on. So, put an end to your effort to catch him."

The God of Death was satisfied with the reasoning given by Lord Yama. He accepted the advice of Lord Yama and went away.

The purpose of narrating the above story is twofold. Firstly it is to impress that this world is non-existent and hence, it was never born. Secondly, to answer the two follow up questions – how could it appear to be born when it was never born and how can a world with a form arise out of *brahman* who is without a form and immutable.

Maharshi Vasishta wants to inform us through the story of *ākāśaja*that the illusory world appears due to the strength of the remnant impressions caused by the *avidyā* of the creatures from the previous creation. The next question is answered by the Sage using skilfully art as an analogy. He said:

यथा चित्रकृदन्तःस्था निर्देहा भाति पुत्रिका ।
तथैव भासते ब्रह्मा चिदाकाशाच्छरञ्जनम् ।।

avidyā yathā citrakṛdantaḥsthā nirdehā bhāti putrikā |
tathaiva bhāsate brahmā cidākāśāccharañjanam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 2, Sloka 55

Say, a painter draws a picture on the wall. How does he do it ? Initially an outline of the picture forms in his mind. Does the form in his mind have a body ? No. But from the form without a body in his mind, a picture with a body marked by a few lines emerges on the wall. That means from a bodiless form, a form with a body is born. In the same way the Consciousness-space has the power to form a clear reflection of itself as Hiranyagarbha's body. The body forms as a changeless change (in Sanskrit language it is called as *vivarta*). With the above explanation, the Sage concluded the second chapter.

9. Wakeful World is also a Mentation

A common problem confronted during discussions in Vedanta is that a point made to explain an issue creates new doubts in the mind of the pursuer, either that point itself or the process of making that point, even when the teacher is as eminent as Maharshi Vasishta. No wonder that Rama raised a searching question to the Maharshi at this juncture

Rama: Maharshi! You said that Hiranyagarbha had a mental body only, not a physical one. Mind is nothing but thoughts. Thoughts arise out of the impressions accumulated from the past actions. That being so, how could you say that the God of Death failed to capture Hiranyagarbha because he did not have any impressions from past actions and he lacked action even in the present?

Vasishta: Rama! It depends on the perspective. One is that of the ignorant folk. In their opinion, Hiranyagarbha is a title which is attained by an individual through the meritorious deeds performed by him in the past. Your question arises when viewed from such a perspective.

The second is from a metaphysical viewpoint. It comes from a full understanding of the Self. The world has no existence at all when seen from this position. This is the perspective of Hiranyagarbha. In his view, the wakeful world, the remnant impressions (from the past actions) which get carried forward, thoughts, and so on are like 'the burnt out cloth.' They retain only a semblance of form but no real features.

Suppose you throw a folded cloth into a fire. After the cloth is burnt, its ashes retain the form of the original folds. It may appear as a cloth, but it is no more a cloth. It is just ashes. Viewed from a distance, children may mistake it to be a cloth. Knowledgeable elders, however, see it as ashes. It is called asThe Doctrine of Burnt out Cloth (*dagdhapaṭa nyāya*).

From Hiranyagarbha's view, his mental body is like a burnt out cloth. It has no Beingness. My teaching also comes from this angle.

For a meaningful discussion between a teacher and the student, the conversation has to take place from a common perspective. The speaker and the listener cannot argue from different viewpoints. Further, it hardly needs to be added that the knowledgeable view is clearly superior to the ignorant view. Hence, my teaching to you is from the position of Knowledge.

Rama: Master! Hiranyagarbha is the first individual in the creation. While all others have two bodies– a physical body and a mental body, Hiranyagarbha has only the mental body. What is the reason for it?

Maharshi: Rama! All the individuals in this creation are born because of their ignorance. Ignorance creates the quintuplicated five fundamental elements. So all those born due to ignorance have a physical and a mental body. Hiranyagarbha's own ignorance was not the cause for his birth. The total ignorance of the individuals of the previous creation is the cause for his birth. So he does not have a physical body born out of his own ignorance. He has a subtle mental body. It is also called '*ātivāhika śarīra*.'

The five elements that exist in your dream world can not be the cause for your birth. So they can not create a body for you because you are the source for their origin. Likewise, the source for the five fundamental elements of the wakeful world is Hiranyagarbha. They cannot create a physical body for him. So he has only a mental body.

The purpose of our discussion on the origin of Hiranyagarbha was to point out to you that your wakeful world is as much a mentation of yours as your dream world is."

The last sentence puzzled Rama considerably. Initially the Maharshi had said that the wakeful world was Hiranyagarbha's dream. But now he said that it was in Rama's mind only. Another confusion was about the body of Hiranyagarbha. Hiranyagarbha was not born because of his ignorance. He originated due to the collective ignorance of all the individuals of the previous creation. It means, the mental body of Hiranyagarbha was born out of the ignorance of those individuals. Some of them must have been reborn now.

So the ignorance of the individuals who are reborn should also have been the cause for the creation of the mental body of Hiranyagarbha. The minds of the people existing at present here originated due to their own ignorance.

If the minds of these individuals are put together as a composite mind, there is a possibility for that composite mind to be the mental body of Hiranyagarbha. If that is so, Rama's own mental world would be only a part of the mental world of Hiranyagarbha. Hiranyagarbha's mind cannot be the same as Rama's mind. But the Maharshi said that the wakeful world was Rama's mental world only. Therefore, there was a need for clarity on what exactly constituted the mind in the opinion of the Sage.

With those thoughts rolling, Rama posed a question to Sage Vasishta.

भगवन्मनसो रूपं कीदृशं वद मे स्फुटम् ।

bhagavanmanaso rūpaṃ kīdṛśaṃ vada me sphuṭam |

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 37

Sir, kindly explain to me clearly what is mind.

The 4th *sarga* begins with the above question.

10. Form of the Mind

Maharshi Vasishta's reply was quite a surprise. He said.

रामास्य मनसो रूपं न किंचिदपि दृश्यते ।
नाममात्रादृते व्योम्नो यथा शून्यजडाकृतेः ।।

rāmāsya manaso rūpaṃ na kiṃcidapi dṛśyate |
nāmamātrādṛte vyomno yathā śūnyajaḍākṛteḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 38

Rama! Space exists. What is the shape of the space? It has no form or shape. It has a name only. The mind also is like that. It has a name only, no form. It is also inert like space.

संकल्पनं मनो विद्धि संकल्पात्तन्न भिद्यते ।
यथो द्रवत्वात्सलिलं तथा स्पन्दो यथानिलात् ।।

saṃkalpanaṃ mano viddhi saṃkalpāttanna bhidyate |
yatho dravatvātsalilaṃ tathā spando yathānilāt ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 43

Thought is Mind. The mind is born due to thought. It is not a double talk by me. Liquidity is water. Movement is wind. In spite of it, people say water has come out of liquidity, wind out of movement. Pot is clay and nothing else. But people say pot has come out of clay. Likewise, I am saying 'thought is mind, and mind is born out of thought.'

Rama! I know the reason for your query. You are wondering about what form Hiranyagarbha's body could take. He has only a mind. You think that your mind would be only a part of Hiranyagarbha's mind because his mind is the composite of all the minds.

The various objects appearing in your dream have temporary Beingness. Where did they get the Beingness from ? The Beingness of your mind provides the Beingness for all the objects in your dream. Beyond that, they do not have any independent existence of their own. Because the Beingness (*satta*) of your mind extends to different objects of your dream, what is seen as different beingnesses in the dream is really one Beingness only. There are no parts or types in Beingness. In fact there cannot be any parts or divisions in Beingness. It is only your imagination that the beingness of the waves in the dream and the beingness of the dream ocean are different. It is your mind's beingness that has given beingness to both of them. So it is not correct to say that there are different dream beingnesses and they are different parts of your mind. We have to say that the beingness of your mind and the beingness of the dream objects are one only.

Similarly, the beingness of every object in the wakeful world comes from the Beingness of Hiranyagarbha's mind. The awake world objects do not have their own separate beingnesses. Your mind's beingness is the same as Hiranyagarbha's. Hence there is no difference between Hiranyagarbha's mental world and your mental world. All that is present in your mental world is present in you only. They are born out of you. They will be absorbed back into you. So the existence of your mental world is not different from your existence.

Apply the same logic to your wakeful world. You see many things here. Their Beingness cannot be different from the Beingness of the 'seer.'

The same thing can be expressed in a different way. It is not correct to say that the Beingness of one thing extends to another thing. We can at best say that the Beingness of one thing appears to extend to the other. It means that the second object does not have any beingness (existence). If the object does not have existence, it would imply that the object itself does not exist. In other words, whatever objects are 'perceived,' they are unreal.

When there are no objects to be perceived, what would happen to the perceiver? When there is nothing to perceive, he is no more a perceiver. 'Perception' ends and he remains as pure Self. Such a position is called Aloneness, *advaita*, Non-duality, no-twoness.

11. Dream in a Dream

Based on the above exposition by the Sage, Rama posed another question.

Rama: Teacher! You made two mutually contradictory statements and then declared that both mean the same. Is it your position that the apparently visible world is non-existent ? Or do you say that it exists ? If you say that it does not exist, you need not preach to us to get rid of the attachment to worldly things. What is the need to teach about something that is non-existent ? On the other hand, if the seen world does really exist, it will remain so in spite of your teaching. A thing that has real existence cannot be destroyed. I believe that the visible world does really exist. I consider it to be something like a disease. Kindly, tell me, sir, the remedy for the disease.

Vasishta: What you said is correct. If what is seen does really exist, it can never be destroyed. When the world really exists, there is no scope for liberation to anyone. But we can not deny the existence of liberation, because those elders who experientially realized it do tell us that they live as *jīvanmukta*-s after obtaining liberation. Therefore, the considered view, the ultimate truth, is that the visible world does not exist.

Rama: Sir, you say that a non-existent world appears and it is the cause for happiness, sorrow etc. It is like asking us to believe that the son of a barren woman crushed the mountains to a powder. How can we believe that?

Vasishta: Rama! It is not something to be believed. It has to be realized. The world does not exist. It was never born. Yet it is seen. The reason for the appearance of the world is your mind. Your mind has that quality to project a world. Doesn't it show you dreams? Please listen:

मनोदृश्यमयं दोषं तनोतीमं क्षयात्मकम् ।
असदेव सदाकारं स्वप्नः स्वप्नान्तरं यथा ।।

manodṛśyamayaṃ doṣaṃ tanotīmaṃ kṣayātmakam |
asadeva sadākāraṃ svapnaḥ svapnāntaraṃ yathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Slokla 78

You readily accept that your dream world is unreal. Sometimes, you get a dream within a dream. It means that you are with a body in the first dream and you are dreaming within that dream body. Now, what is your opinion of the second dream ? Do you agree that the second dream is also 'not real'?

The individual in the second dream sees the second dream world clearly. So he does not agree if you say that it is not real. But you know that the second dream has formed within the first dream and you accept that the first dream is not real. When the first dream is not real, the second dream born out of the unreal first dream cannot be real. You have to admit that the second dream is not real. But the dreamer in the second dream does not agree since he sees his dream world. If the seer in the second dream is real, then what he sees could have been real. But he himself is not real, his action of seeing is also not real. Then, how can that which is seen by him be real ?

The dreamer from the second dream challenges you. He argues that his world is real and says that his real world could not have come from an unreal source (your first dream). Would you agree with him? Sometimes, it may appear as though a real thing came out of an unreal thing. It is a trick played by the mind. Rama, compare your wakeful world to the second dream. Your world is born out of a non-existent mind. Therefore, the awake world is non-existent.

That is why we say that the wakeful state world is also *mithya* like the dream and it is the mind that does this magic.

स्फुरति वल्गति गच्छति याचते
अपरतामुपयात्यपि केवलं

भ्रमति मज्जति संहरति स्वयम् ।
चलति चञ्चलशक्तितया मनः ।।

sphurati valgati gacchati yācate
aparatāmupayātyapi kevalaṃ

bhramati majjati saṃharati svayam |
calati cañcalaśaktitayā manaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 4, Sloka 80

The mind has the quality of movement. Being mobile, it plays many tricks. It appears as though it is separate (from others). It trots like a horse.

It wanders around desiring something or the other. Sometimes, it falls prey to its own illusion. That is its dream state. Sometimes, it calms down and disappears. That state is *suṣupti* (deep sleep). Sometimes, it immerses itself in *samsāra* and goes through the travails and tribulations of the world. It is the wakeful state. It attains the Self-Knowledge, will be alone without a second and remains as the Supreme Self. It is Liberation. It is the mind that plays all the drama."

With those profound words Maharshi Vasishta concluded the 4th *sarga*.

Rama was convinced that the wakeful world was *mithya* with the reasoning given by the Sage. He, however, felt on deeper thinking that a *mithya* object could appear only on a substrate.For example, for the mistaken appearance of a snake in semi dark conditions, a rope must exist as the substratum. If there is no rope, there is no scope for the illusion of a snake to arise. Rama wondered what could be the substratum over which the illusory world would get projected. He posed that question to the Sage.

Vasishta: Rama ! That is a very good question. The substratum is the 'Supreme Self.' When all the perceivable objects of the world dissolve, whatever remains is the Supreme Self. Even the Vedas were unable to describe the nature of that which remains. *jīvanmukta*-s (liberated individuals) realize the Supreme Self experientially.

Your question about the substrate indicates that you understood the possibility of the emergence of the visible world from a substratum through the process of changeless change (*vivarta*). I congratulate you on that. The material cause for the origination of the entire visible world through the process of changeless change is the Supreme Self only. I explained to you earlier what is meant by the process of changeless change. The appearance of a snake in place of the rope is due to the process of changeless change. What caused the appearance of the illusory snake through the process of changeless change is the rope. The substrate as well as the material cause for the appearance of the illusory world through the process of changeless change is the Supreme Self."

The 5th *sarga* concluded on that point.

The Sage, however, continued his discourse into the 6th *sarga*. He said:

Vasishta: (Continuing): Rama! You understood that the world originated from the Supreme Self through the process of changeless change. What does it exactly mean ? Birth through the process of changeless change implies that the origination is nothing but pure imagination, an illusion. The illusory appearance will end only by gaining true Knowledge. True Knowledge about what ? True Knowledge about the substratum. Therefore, one has to acquire the Knowledge of the Supreme Self, the substratum, in order to totally end the illusory appearance of the world. That is Freedom. That is Liberation. Association with noble people and the study of the proper scriptures will aid in the process."

12. Way to Attain The Self-Knowledge

Rama: Sir, what type of austerities are to be observed in order to swiftly obtain Self-Knowledge?

Vasishta: No deeds can help you in attaining Self-Knowledge. If one performs the actions prescribed in the scriptures without a desire for the fruit, a strong yearning for Self-Knowledge develops. That is what the ritualistic actions and austerities do.

In order to acquire Self-Knowledge, association with noble and knowledgeable elders, study of proper scriptures, and listening to the scriptural teaching, reflection on what is heard and deep contemplation are necessary.

The discussions between Rama and the Sage continued thus with Rama raising a few more questions. They are covered in the 7th sarga as follows:

Rama: Sir, you said that the Knowledge about the Supreme Self would give us liberation. Please teach me about the adjunct (*upādhi*) in which the Supreme Self is clearly manifest and also the means by which one can easily attain that Knowledge.

Vasishta: Rama! The Supreme Self is well manifested in your heart itself. That doesn't mean that He is finite or divided. In fact,the entire universe is He only. But He is not visible. He is Consciousness. The universe does not exist without Him. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and the entire universe are Consciousness only.

Rama: (Interrupting Sage Vasishta's enthusiastic harangue): Maharshi ! Even a child knows that the world is permeated with Consciousness. The conscious forms are the individual beings only. Can there be a world without sentient creatures?

Vasishta: If you think that the world is filled with sentient beings, it means that you have not understood the real point. You are mixing up the words consciousness and individual beings as if they are synonymous. A sentient being is one who goes through the cycle of births, deaths and related experiences. 'Consciousness' is that which does not change. It is unaffected by any experience. Consciousness and the beings are not the same. The separate individual, who experiences the joys and sorrows, will be Consciousness Itself when he turns away from objects and looks towards Pure Consciousness. The individual with the separate sense of self experiencing the materialistic world is not the Pure Consciousness. It is said in the scriptures as follows:

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥

bhidyate hṛdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṃśayāḥ |
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmindṛṣṭe parāvare ||

Mundakopanishad, II – ii - 8

[**Note:** Yoga Vasishta often quotes from Upanishads. The Upanishad *vākya* -s sometimes appear as verses within the text without any change, like the above]

Once the Supreme Self, who is both the cause and effect, is realized, the knot in the heart of the separate being gets destroyed. The 'knot in the heart,' which is the effect of primal ignorance, refers to mistakenly identifying oneself with his mind (the belief that 'I am my ego'). When the knot in the heart is shattered, all the doubts that have accumulated in his heart will vanish. With that the effects of his past actions end.

From the scriptural statement cited above, it is clear that the Knowledge of the Supreme Self alone can break the knot in the heart. One may wonder if practicing *samādhi* and yoga will also lead to a similar condition. *Samādhi* is obtained through the practice of controlling the mind. Control of the mind can help to bring about the arresting of the senses from running after worldly objects. So the Yogi's desires for worldly things may disappear. Unless one realizes that all percepts are unreal and non-existent, practicing only *samādhi* will not stop the yogi from going back to the worldly things when he is out of *samādhi.* Just being in *samādhi* will not bring about the knowledge that the visible world is untrue. It is necessary to realize the false appearance of the world in order to be liberated. Liberation cannot be attained from the practice of deep meditation alone. Knowledge of Self is needed.

13. *Brahman* Himself Is the Bound Individual

Rama: (After listening and reflecting deeply on what the Sage said): Who is the one bound by samsāra - the individual being or *brahman*?

If the individual being is the one in bondage, *brahman* will also be bound because the individual finally merges with *brahman* as per our theory. We cannot say that the individual does not merge in *brahman* because that would negate liberation for the individual. Further, who is the substratum for the individual being ? Is *Brahman* not the substrate ? If so, the entire superimposed world on *Brahman* will disappear on the attainment of the Knowledge of the Self. The individual being is after all a part of the visible world. Hence he would also disappear along with the world. When the individual being is not anymore there, for whom is the liberation then?

Alternatively, if it is said that the substratum for the individual is not *brahman,* and that there is another substrate for the individual, it amounts to accepting that there is another Real Thing apart from *brahman*. That would violate the scriptural statement that *brahman* alone IS without a second.

It thus looks that *brahman* cannot be the substratum for the individual and it also looks that we cannot accept another real thing to be the substratum. It is very confusing to me and I am confused by these doubts. Sir, please tell me clearly whether the bondage is for the individual being or the Supreme Self.

Vasishta: Rama! You explained well the kinks that may arise, if we say that the bondage is for the individual being. You are right. Bondage is for *brahman* only. *Brahman* gets bound due to ignorance of His own Self. He is liberated obtaining the Knowledge of His Self. When *brahman* enters into the inert body and its sense organs, He becomes a separate individual. He imagines that He is his finite body-mind and thus gets bound by *samsāra*. In this stage, he is known as the *samsāri* – the worldly being.

Eventually *Brahman* knows His True Self (obtains Self-Knowledge). The illusory things superimposed on him disappear. The separate individual will also disappear with them. *Brahman* is not affected by all this in any way. He remains ever in His freedom.

14. Intrinsic Qualities of the Supreme Self

Rama: Maharshi ! Please explain clearly the true qualities of *Brahman*.

Vasishta:

देशाद्देशान्तरं दूरं प्राप्तायाः संविदो वपुः ।
निमिषेणैव यन्मध्ये तद्रूपं परमात्मनः ।।

deśāddeśāntaraṃ dūraṃ prāptāyāḥ saṃvido vapuḥ |
nimiṣeṇaiva yanmadhye tadrūpaṃ paramātmanaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 7, Sloka 19

The true nature of *Brahman* is the form of the Knowingness which exists in the gap as a thought-wave moves from one percept to the other percept crossing the gap between the two percepts in a fraction of a moment.

[**Note:** The above verse is a profound expression of the Vedantic position. It describes the intrinsic quality of the Supreme Self. The same description with almost the same words appears repeatedly in Yoga Vasishta. In the forthcoming story of Leela also the verse appears. So we shall study the verse in detail.

The essential meaning of the verse (*tātparya*) given above is very difficult to understand. The Commentator, Shri Ananda Bodhendra Saraswati Swamy, in his' *tātparya prakāśa vyāakhyāna*' explained the verse very well. We shall adopt his explanation.

The 'Doctrine of the Moon over the Bough' is a popular rule of logic known as *śākhā candra nyāya* in Sanskrit. A child asked his mother "Mother! Where is the moon?" The mother asked him to look up at the sky. The child looked in the sky in different directions and said that he could not find the moon. Then the mother told him to look at the top branch of the mango tree. She said that the moon was sitting over it. The child looked at the specific branch of the mango tree and then found the moon. Now, do you think that the moon was sitting on the tree branch? The Moon was somewhere in the space above in the sky. The branch of the tree was right here on the earth. As soon as the child was able to see the branch, a thought wave from his mind (*antahkaraṇa vṛtti*) emerged and travelled along with his sight up to the branch. Consciousness was already present in that wave. The consciousness along with the wave reached the branch.

But the child's vision didn't stop at the branch. His vision from the branch reached the moon in the sky in a fraction of a moment. Along with the vision, the thought wave of mind and consciousness in it also travelled up to the moon. The entire process happened in a jiffy. The child saw the branch and the moon beyond it almost simultaneously. It means the consciousness in the mind of the child uninterruptedly travelled from the branch of the tree on the earth to the moon in the sky in a fraction of a moment, without any break in-between. The child could not have seen both the branch and the moon simultaneously if there were to be any obstruction in-between. So we have to accept that the consciousness in the child's mind extends continuously, from the branch to the moon, without any break in-between.

The branch was an object at the initial end and the moon was another object at the far end for the unbroken consciousness. Consciousness was thus associated with the two objects at these two ends.

But it was associated with no object in the gap in-between these two ends. So, we have to accept that it was *nirviṣaya* or without association of any object in the objectless gap between the two end-objects.

The verse defines the real form of the Supreme Self to be the form of Consciousness in the gap in-between the two objects (i.e. Consciousness associated without any objects).

We have taken a branch on the earth and the far away moon in the sky in the example in order to get a clear understanding about Consciousness un-associated with any object. But it doesn't mean that the definition is applicable only if the objects are physical and far apart from one another. Say, you have a thought T1 in your mind. Now, it is gone and another thought T2 has come. What is present in the gap between these two thoughts ? It is the objectless Consciousness only. And that is the Supreme Self.]

15. Obstructions to Self-Knowledge

Rama: (After carefully listening to the Maharshi's description on the nature of Supreme Self) Sir! In order to know anything in the world, we use one or other means (*pramāṇa*) like the sensory organs or the techniques of inference, analogy etc. to obtain the knowledge. Any of these means show the perceived objects like the tree branch, moon and others as though they are real objects. But you say that all these objects are unreal. The Supreme Self that exists between the tree branch and the moon is not available through any such means to Knowledge. Therefore, any of the *pramāṇa*-s go to prove that the Self is non-existent. As against this evidence, you say that the Self is the only thing that has existence. Is it not contradictory to our experience in the world?

Vasishta: We cannot say that the Supreme Self is not available through any *pramāṇa*. One can know the Self through 'the great statements' (*mahā vākya*-s) in the Upanishads. But the seekers are unable to attain the Knowledge of the Self listening to these great sentences because of the obstacles in their path. The obstacles are the result of the demerit they had accumulated from their past bad actions. It is better, therefore, to get rid of such obstacles first. Believing the world to be real is a major obstacle. The remedy for it is the realization that all things perceived are *mithya*. Once all the obstacles are removed, the Upanishadic sentences like '*tattvamasi* (You are that)' will help the seeker to obtain True Knowledge.

Rama: Why would the knowledge that 'what is seen is real' be an obstacle to gain True Knowledge (i.e. Knowledge of Self or *brahman*) ? If one has the knowledge about Peter, is it not possible to have the knowledge about Paul?

Vasishta: If one has to get the knowledge of an object, that object should first get reflected in his mind (*antahkaraṇa*). If the knowledge that 'what is seen is real' is present in the mind, then it is not possible for *Brahman* to get reflected in that mind. As and when *brahman* is reflected in a mind, *brahman* will destroy the ignorance in that mind. Because of the incompatibility between the percept (*dṛśya*) and *brahman*, the knowledge of both is not reflected in the mind at the same time.

Rama: Teacher! My doubt has not been cleared. Light and darkness are opposites. It is not possible to see both simultaneously. But it is possible to have their knowledge in the mind together. Likewise, the knowledge in the mind that 'the object seen is real' coexists with no perception of duality at certain times. For example during deep sleep or in a passive state of the mind, duality is not reflected. Every individual must be able to experience the Pure *brahman* under those situations. But it does not happen so. Why is that?

Vasishta: Rama! You are slightly mistaken in your conception. There is not even a fraction of a second when duality is not perceived by a man who has not attained absolute certainty in his mind about the unreality of the perceived world. Duality is always and continuously reflected. For example, take a mirror. Can you imagine a 'no reflection stage' in the mirror? Even if there are no objects, the sky or a ray of light will be reflected. The mind is also like a mirror. During the passive state and *suṣupti*, the mind reflects ignorance. Hence, the Non-dual Supreme Self does not get reflected in that.

Rama: Teacher! You say, on one hand, that *Brahman* is very subtle. But on the other hand you hold that the wide world is super imposed on *brahman*. How can that be possible? Can the Himalayan mountain range sit on a mustard seed ?

Vasishta: (After reflecting over the question for a while): Rama! You are raising the same issues again. How could a vast dream world fit into a small part of your mind ?

Even after a topic is understood clearly, one keeps getting a doubt if the knowledge is not firmly ingested in the mind. The only remedy for such a situation is listening properly to scriptures and reflecting on the message till it is totally absorbed.

Rama: Which is the best scripture to be studied?

[**Note:** Maharshi Valmiki was not only a great poet but also an expert on the human psyche. Taking this as an opportune moment, the Sage said in the words of Maharshi Vasishta that Yoga Vasishta was the best scripture. He further described in detail how it helps a spiritual aspirant intent on attaining the Knowledge of the Self. He also emphasized the need of simultaneously supplementing the effort with Self-inquiry.]

Vasishta: Rama! Study Yoga Vasishta. While studying it, you should constantly inquire into your true Self with unswerving attention.

Rama: How long should one do it?

Vasishta: One should continue till one gets liberated (*jīvanmukti*). Once he attains *Jīvanmukti, videhamukti* (liberation without the physical body) automatically follows.

Rama: How would one know if *jīvanmukti* is attained?

Vasishta: It will be known by itself. Do you need an outsider to tell you that you woke up from sleep? It's the same way.

However, if you know the characteristics of a *jīvanmukta*, you may try to attain them. For, whatever are the natural characteristics of a *jīvanmukta*, they are also the methods of practice for a seeker (*sādhak*). So, I will tell you the characteristics of a *jīvanmukta* and also those of a *videhamukta*.

Note: The narrations on *jīvanmukta* and *videhamukta* are detailed in the 9th Sarga.

16. Characteristics of a *jīvanmukta* (Liberated while alive)

1. Though involved with worldly affairs, he will always be thinking that the world is non-existent and he remains internally as the Supreme Self. Though fully awake, he remains, as though, in deep sleep i.e. *suShupti*

   जाग्रत्येव सुषुप्तवत् *jāgratyevasuṣuptavān.*

2. He does not feel elated by joys or dejected by sorrows.

3. While in *suṣupti* he remains awake. He does not have wakefulness. It is a strange position.

   यो जागर्ति सुषुप्तस्थो यस्य जाग्रन्न विद्यते

   yojāgartisuṣuptasthoyasyajāgrannavidyate

4. **रागद्वेषभयादीनामनुरूपं चरन्नपि । योऽन्तर्व्योमवदच्छस्थः स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते ।।**

   rāgadveṣabhayādīnāmanurūpaṃ carannapi |
   yo'ntarvyomavadacchasthaḥ sa jīvanmukta ucyate ||

   Utpatti Prakarana, Sarg 9, Sloka 8

   Outwardly, he acts with likes and dislikes. But inwardly, he remains space-like (i.e. without any attachment).

5. Whether he is working or not, he does not claim to be the agent for whatever goes on. His mind will not get associated with anything.

6. When he opens his eyes, i.e. in the state of awareness of True Knowledge, it is dissolution. When he closes eyes, i.e. a state of not being aware of True Knowledge, it is creation.

7. He is afraid of none and no one is afraid of him.

8. Even though he has a mind, he does not have thoughts.

यः सचित्तोऽपि निश्चित्तः *yaḥ sacittopi niscittaḥ*

9. He remains cool even in anger.

17. Characteristics of a *videhamukta* (Liberated without body)

1. **जीवन्मुक्तपदं त्यक्त्वा देहे कालवशीकृते ।**
विशत्यदेहमुक्तत्वं पवनोऽस्पन्दतामिव ।।

jīvanmuktapadaṃ tyaktvā dehe kālavaśīkṛte |
viśatyadehamuktatvaṃ pavano'spandatāmiva ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 9, Sloka 14

Videha mukti is not a different state; it is another name for *jīvanmukti* *jīvanmukti* is like air in movement. We are aware of the presence of air when it moves. Air is still present even when the movement stops; but we are not aware of its presence. *Videhamukti* is like the state when the movement of air stops. A *jīvanmukta*, whose remnant effects of all his past deeds are expended and his body drops off due to death, is called *videhamukta*.

2. **विदेहमुक्तो नोदेति नास्तमेति न शाम्यति ।**
न सन्नासन्न दूरस्थो न चाहं न च नेतरः ।।

videhamukto nodeti nāstameti na śāmyati |
na sannāsanna dūrastho na cāhaṃ na ca netaraḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 9, Sloka 15

He neither arises nor sets nor perishes. He is neither far away nor near. He is not me'.

3. He is the Sun that shines; he is Vishnu that protects; he is Rudra that destroys; and he is Brahma that creates.

4. He is the space containing the air; he is the earth bearing all; he is the water flowing; and he is the fire incinerating.

5. Why say much, he is what is seen now, what was seen in the past and what will appear in the future.

Rama: (After listening to the above description): Teacher! You say that the *videhamukta* is all the three worlds. So it appears to me that the liberated individuals are again born as ordinary bound individuals. Because, when one attains *videhamukti*, he takes the form of the three worlds. That means the three worlds were liberated already. If the three worlds were already liberated, we should be unable to see them. But we are seeing them now. Therefore, the *videhamukta*-s must have been reborn as the current normal bound individuals. If this is true, the statement that 'Liberation is permanent' is invalid. If we are to say that they are not reborn, the world would become non-existent. Kindly clear my doubt.

Vasishta: Rama! If the three worlds are to be really real, then only what you said would be true. But these three worlds do not exist at all. However much I searched, I see only gold, no ornaments. I see only water, not the waves. I feel the movement in the air, nothing else. Similarly, there is no wakeful world apart from *Brahman*.

Rama: Sir, you say that liberation is to know that the visible world does not exist. How can one deny the world, when it is seen so clearly? What is the way out for the problem?

Vasishta: Rama! The illusionary appearance of the world is like cholera. It has been there for a long long time. It cannot go away that quickly. Self-inquiry is the only mantra to be out of it. One who has climbed up the hill should not jump suddenly down. He should descend slowly down. Similarly, Knowledge of the Self should be attained by slow and steady practice. I shall tell you the story of Leela in order to make things clear about adopting a systematic practice.

18. The World is Never Born

Vasishta: Rama! Let me at the very outset declare to you the theory I wish to establish through this story. It is better that you understand the basic idea upfront. The salient message of my teaching is that the world is never born. If you ask me how one sees it if it is not born, my answer is that it is an imagination only. It is a phantasm.

In order to prove that the world is not created, I would like to suggest a little thought experiment.The entire world disappears at the end of a *kalpa*. Think it over - what happens to it and where it goes ? Nobody knows, because there will be no one to know. But that place into which it disappears should be Pure and Real. When the creation re-occurs, it has to come from that Pure and Real place only. Because the world is created from 'Real', and by definition a Real thing does not change, the creation has to be an illusion.

When we say that waves are born from water, it doesn't mean that the waves are separate from water. Still, they appear to be distinct from water. They also appear as if they are newly born. Similarly, the world also appears 'as though born' from the Real thing. The fact is, it has never been born.

[**Note:** The discussion continued into the10th*sarga* with Rama raising another question.]

Rama: Maharshi! When the world is dissolved, whatever remains will be without a form (*nirākāra*). One need not doubt that. But how is it possible to say that it is not a void (*śūnya*)? If it is not a void, how can we say that it is unchanging (*nirvikāra*)? What does it mean to say that it is neither existent nor non-existent; neither light nor darkness; neither conscious nor inert? If it is not something, how could it change into the world ?

Vasishta: Rama! You have not understood me fully. Listen again.

अनुत्कीर्णा यथा स्तम्भे संस्थिता शालभञ्जिका ।
तथा विश्वं स्थितं तत्र तेन शून्यं न तत्पदम् ।।

anutkīrṇā yathā stambhe saṃsthitā śālabhañjikā |
tathā viśvaṃ sthitaṃ tatra tena śūnyaṃ na tatpadam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 10, Sloka 7

There is a sculpture on a stone pillar. Where was it before it was carved ? We have to say that it was in the pillar only. It did not manifest before carving. After chiselling out some parts of the pillar, it manifested. Now tell me, whether the figure was already there in the pillar and has come out now or has a new figure been born from somewhere ? It is logical to say that a figure potentially existed in the pillar. It means that the state of the statue prior to the emergence of the figure cannot be a void state. The state of the world prior to its manifestation was also similar.

The world existed in the Real thing in an unmanifested condition as the statue existed in the stone pillar. Hence we cannot say that the Real thing is a void. The pillar, before carving out the figure, is not void. The stone prior to sculpting the statue was not a void; so also the state of dissolution prior to creation is not a void state.

Rama: There is no difference of opinion regarding the origin of the figure from a stone pillar. But why are there so many different views about the origin of the world from *brahman*?

Vasishta: Rama! The place where the pillar is located, the sculptor, and the tools he used are all objects which are perceivables. In other words, the knowledge with respect to the statue on the pillar, the location of the statue, its time and action by which it emerged are based on direct perception by everyone. So there is no difference of opinion. With respect to *Brahman*, however, the locus, time, action etc. do not exist and no tools were used. Hence there are different opinions with regard to creation.

Rama: The statue on the pillar is created with the help of tools. The world has been created in *brahman* without the use of any tools. When there is so much difference between these two, how can you give the analogy of the statue for the creation process?

Vasishta: Whenever an analogy is given, only that specific aspect with respect to which the comparison is made has to be considered as we discussed previously. The figure in the pillar does not have a beingness separate from that of the pillar. Similarly, the Beingness of the world is not separate from that of *Brahman*. My comparison of the statue with the world was confined to only the Beingness aspect. You think over the issue from that perspective only. The world manifests out of *brahman* and dissolves in *brahman*.

What is a void ? One describes something in common parlance as void if nothing is seen. But what does it exactly mean – 'not seeing a thing' is to be called a void or 'nothing being there' ? Who is to decide it ? If void means 'nothing being there,' then *brahman* is not void. On the other hand, if 'not seeing a thing' is called void, then *brahman* cannot be called not-void (*aśūnya*). That is why I said that *Brahman* cannot be said to be either void or not-void. *Brahman* does not have these characteristics. These are all embellishing expressions in the language and syntax. Phrases like '*brahman* is neither light nor darkness' etc. also have to be understood similarly.

I was speaking to you about the salient concept being illustrated through the story of Leela. The world is born from *brahman*, like the waves on water. It appears as though something is born; but there is no actual birth. Hence, I proposed that the world is never born. I am going to establish it through the story of Leela.

19. Two Facets of *brahman*

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta slightly changed tack here to introduce the intrinsic qualities of *brahman* from two perspectives – 1. the perspective of those who realized the Self and 2. the perspective of those yogis who had not. The discussion opens with a question by Rama.]

Rama: Maharshi, please explain in detail what exactly are the qualities of *Brahman*.

Vasishta: The yogis practicing the *nirvikalpa samādhi* understand *brahman* as follows:

1. Yoga is control of thoughts. If one succeeds in the technique of controlled *samādhi*, all the thought waves in the mind will subside. The yogi then witnesses the self-luminous Beingness. That Itself is *Brahman*.

2. The triad of meditator, the meditated and meditating will end for a yogi who attains *nirvikalpa samādhi*. There will be a Witnesser to the ending of the triad. That Witnesser is *Brahman*. During *samādhi*, in the state before his mind gets back to its tendency to go towards the objective world, the Yogi's mind stays pure and serene. That Itself is *Brahman*.

3. During deep *samādhi* state, the Yogi's mind attains the form of infinite *brahman*. He is alive; but he does not feel the touch of the wind or the smell of the flowers. During that stage, whatever is experienced in his mind is *brahman*.

I shall describe the characteristics of *brahman* as understood by the individuals who have not yet realized the Supreme Self.

1. In the state of dreamless deep sleep, the mind is not inert. What one experiences in that state is the same as that during dissolution (*pralaya*). The essence of that experience is *brahman*.

2. The essential nature of space is voidness. The essential nature of a stone is solidity. Likewise, the essential nature of *brahman* is Consciousness.That itself is *brahman*.

3. Imagine that which remains after one relinquishes all objects and also his mind.That which remains is *brahman*.

4. You are aware of the five sheaths – *annamaya kośa* (gross sheath), *prāṇamaya kośa* (energy sheath), *manomaya kośa* (perceptual sheath), *vijnānamaya kośa* (cognitive sheath) and *āanandamayā kośa* (transcendental sheath) – the five inter penetrating layers of the individual. The transcendental sheath is the subtlest of them all. What is within the transcendental sheath is *brahman*.

5. The composite subtle body formed from combining the subtle bodies of all the individuals has a subtle space inside it. What is present inside that subtle space is *brahman*.

6. Direct perception comes from the five sensory organs. There is one unbroken Consciousness behind the five senses. That is *Brahman*.

7. A man is aware of his mind. He also knows whether his mind is functioning or not. There has to be a Witness-Consciousness that knows all such things.That is *brahman*.

8. We proved that there is no birth to the world. Even though it has no birth, it appears as if it is born. Because of whom it appears like that? Because of *brahman* only. The world is not different from *brahman*. But it appears to be distinct from *brahman*. The reason for the origin and such an appearance of the world is *brahman*.

9. The affairs of the world proceed at a gigantic pace, but *brahman* who is the cause for all that is still and unmoving like a rock. To be totally immobile like that is an intrinsic quality of *brahman*.

10. The visible space is perfect and complete in itself. Yet it facilitates the existence of millions and millions of things within it. It appears to be a void because it gives such a facility. *brahman* facilitates the existence of space as well as all the gross and subtle worlds within Itself. It is the nature of *brahman* to appear to be a void though by Itself It is perfect, complete and gives the opportunity for all those things to exist within It.

11. The thing to be known, the act of knowing and the knower is a triad. The triad is also known as the observed, observing and the observer. Many such triads appear and disappear. There has to be a substrate that changelessly changes as causal to that. That substrate is *brahman*.

12. **स्थावराणां हि यद्रूपं तच्चेद्बोधमयं भवेत् ।**
मनोबुद्ध्यादिनिर्मुक्तं तत्परेणोपमीयते ।।

sthāvarāṇāṃ hi yadrūpaṃ taccedbodhamayaṃ bhavet |
manobuddhyādinirmuktaṃ tatpareṇopamīyate ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 10, Sloka 53

If the inert things in the world attain the Self-Knowledge in the absence of mind, intellect etc., they are equal to *brahman*.

Rama! I shall establish, as I said, through the story of Leela that the only Real substance as described above is *Brahman* and the world which appears to be born from It has not really originated at all.

[**Note:** Rama asked again almost similar questions in the 11th*sarga*. There too the Sage responded suitably. The intention behind the repetition in the dialogue is to help the seeker to arrive at a clear understanding of the subject.

One can note that two distinct explanations are given by Sage Vasishta regarding the genesis of the world. One view is from the Absolute position that the world is not created at all. The other view is from a relative position that the world manifests like a statue from a pillar. The spiritual aspirant has to understand both the aspects clearly. Once the Absolute position is clearly ingested, it will be realized that whatever IS is *brahman*. The intrinsic qualities of *Brahman* from such a view as seen by the Yogi-s were described by the Sage in the 10th*sarga*.

20. Order of Creation

If one takes the empirical viewpoint that the world manifests like the statue in a pillar, it implicitly means that there is a process behind such a manifestation. The process is called the Order of Creation. It was spelt out by the Maharshi in the 12th *sarga*. The Sage began with a review of the principal issues to refresh the memory of Sri Rama.

The points made by him were:

1. During the dissolution phase, *brahman* will be like an individual in *suṣupti* (deep sleep).
2. During the creation phase, *Brahman* will be like us in a dream state. His dream is our world.
3. An individual's dream comes from the impressions stored from his past deeds.

4. The world, which is *brahman*'s form, is created from the pooled impressions (*samiṣṭi samskāra*-s) of all the individuals of the previous *kalpa* (aeon).

5. That is the reason why none believes or takes it to be unreal.

6. Had the world arisen out of one's own impressions from his past actions, it would have been easily understood to be unreal just like one knows the unreality of his dream world. Because the impressions of others are also mingled in the creation of the wakeful world, people are unable to realize its unreality. The difference between the dream world and the wakeful world is only that.

After the above brief review, the Sage explained the order of creation as follows:

- During *suṣupti* and before the commencement of the dream, your *samskāra*-s or impressions from past actions merge with you and remain as you. From the perspective of the limited number of aspects that will be later manifested in the dream world, you are omniscient. Similarly, *brahman* during the period of dissolution is omniscient and of the form of pure Existence.

- You remain without any movement during deep sleep (*suṣupti*). A movement or a vibration in that state kicks up the dream stage. Similarly *īkṣaṇa* causes creation in *Brahman*. *īkṣaṇa* means a look, an intention, an imagination, a thought.

- Because of *īkṣaṇa* quality, *Brahman* gets the name '*īśvara*'. (*īśvara* is Consciousness which has *māyā* as body.)

- Gradually, the thought wave called *īkṣaṇa* gets congealed and becomes a separate individual. He is the first individual. He is given the name Hiranyagarbha.

- From Hiranyagarbha are born the lords of sense organs–such as the Sun.

- Next, the fundamental five elements are born.

- Next, the sense of separate 'self'– *ahamkāra* (the feeling of 'I'ness)– is born.

- Along with *ahamkāra* time is born.

- Sound and Vedas are born from space.

- Next, the five elements through a process called 'quintuplication'(A process in which half of one element gets mixed with $1/8^{th}$ of each of the other four elements), form the universes.

Maharshi Vasishta described the order of creation in reverse to arrive back at *Brahman* as follows:

- Combination of atoms is causal for the world.(the Sanskrit word used was *trasareṇu* which means a collection of atoms – equivalent to a molecule in the chemical terminology).

- Atoms are causal for the molecules.

- Atoms are formed from the fundamental five elements.

- The five elements are formed from *tanmātra*-s (subtle elements).

- The power called *māyā* that has enveloped the Supreme Self is causal for the *tanmātra*-s.

What we can decipher from the above order is that the Supreme Self Itself through *māyā* Is the root cause for the world. The same process is explained by the following verse.

बीजं जगत्सु ननु पञ्चकमात्रमेव
बीजं पराव्यवहितस्थितिशक्तिराद्या ।
बीजं तदेव भवतीति सदानुभूतं
चिन्मात्रमेवमजमाद्यमतो जगच्छीः ।।

bījaṃ jagatsu nanu pañcakamātrameva
bījaṃ parāvyavahitasthitiśaktirādyā |
bījaṃ tadeva bhavatīti sadānubhūtaṃ
cinmātramevamajamādyamato jagacchīḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 12, Sloka 32

"*parāvyavahitasthiti śakti*" means the power that is causal for the world which envelopes directly the Supreme *Brahman*. That power is said to be the cause for the origin of the world. From this, it can be inferred that once the *māyā* (the power) is removed, the world (or in other words whatever that remains) is *brahman*.]

Vasishta: Rama! I do not believe that the world is really created. My intention in describing an order that does not exist is to demonstrate that the world is non-different from *brahman*.

Note: We have already discussed the content of the 13th*sarga* which follows the above description of the order of creation. We studied the 1st and 13th*sarga*-s initially in order to get a handle on the essence of Maharshi Vasishta's teaching. But while doing so,we slightly deviated from the original text. Hence, we shall now briefly recapitulate the contents sequentially as per the original text.

21. Topics Discussed in the 13th *sarga*

1. The Supreme Self was in the form of Intelligence or Consciousness during the Dissolution phase.
2. He later undergoes a changeless change of 'knowing' things. Thus *brahman* becomes a separate individual (*jīva*).
3. The worlds and all the living beings are born from that first individual. The order of creation has already been described above.
4. You have two worlds. One is your dream world and the other is your wakeful world.
5. What you were to the past individuals in your dream world, Hiranyagarbha is that to the past individuals of the wakeful world.
6. Like small sparks coming out of a big fire, millions and millions of individuals emerge from Hiranyagarbha and they claim that each one is separate from the other.
7. The miniscule spark-like thought that 'I am distinct' gradually consolidates and he becomes a separate individual self.

8. That is why the elders said that the individual was made of mind stuff (*manomaya*).
9. When the feeling of separation further solidifies in the individual, he gets a gross body.
10. When the individual wishes to see, the eyes come up; when he wishes to listen, ears come up.
11. Some of the individuals get positions of authority depending on their past actions.
12. The take home message from the above narration is:
    - Hiranyagarbha is also made of mind stuff; but he arises from the composite mind of all the individuals.
    - The wakeful world is Hiranyagarbha's imagination only.
    - Therefore, the wakeful world is non-existent. It has no birth.

Thus Maharshi Vasishta once again emphasized that the world did not originate. After listening to the Sage very diligently, Rama raised a very thoughtful question. The14th *Sarga* opens with the question by Rama.

22. The World, The Individual and Hiranyagarbha

Rama: Maharshi! You described that the first individual, Hiranyagarbha, had an enormous form and he was unlimited. His dimensions could not be measured because he was born prior to the five elements. An ordinary individual is born after the formation of the five elements. He can be measured and is finite in dimensions. There are large differences between these two. But you say that the way the dream world is related to the individual being is the same way that the awake world is related to Hiranyagarbha. How is the comparison between Hiranyagarbha and the individual valid ?

Vasishta: Rama! I told you that an intention (*īkśaṇa*) arose in Pure Consciousness and later got consolidated as Hiranyagarbha. It means that Hiranyagarbha was born out of a thought wave (*sankalpa*). We also said that the finite individuals came out of him like sparks from a fire. The sparks solidified with I-consciousness and became separate individuals. Therefore, even the individuals were also born out of thought waves. Thus, Hiranyagarbha as well as the world engendered by the thoughts of the separate individuals were all born out of intentions only. Rama! The root cause for the origin of everything and everybody is intention (*sankalpa*). When that intention is strong, it gives rise to gross forms. When the *sankalpa* is normal, it gives rise to subtle forms. There is no difference other than that.

Thus all the three--the wakeful world, the separate individual and Hiranyagarbha--are born out of *sankalpa* only. That being the position, how can you differentiate them and say one is limited or the other is unlimited?

Perhaps, when I gave the analogy of finite individuals being born from Hiraranyagarbha as like sparks coming out of fire, you may have understood that the individuals to be travelling from one place to another. That is not correct. There is no other space to move. The individuals arise from the intentions of Pure Consciousness and dissolve back into It. So there is no difference between the individual and Hiranyagarbha.There is no scope for any difference.

Rama: I agree that there is no difference between the separate individual and Hiranyagarbha. But a separate individual desires pleasures. Does it not mean that Hiranyagarbha, the composite of all individuals, would also have a desire for pleasures? The Vedas declare Hiranyagarbha to be endowed with many notable qualities like immense strength. It is also said that his desires are instantly realised and whatever he thinks happens. If Hiranyagarbha and the separate individual are to be the same, can the good qualities of Hiranyagarbha be attributed to the individual being?

Vasishta: Rama!That's not what I have been teaching. Clearly you have not followed me properly. I shall tell you again.

Brahman had a thought wave. As per that thought wave, Hiranyagarbha originated with all the above said good qualities. Then, *Brahman* intended through Hiranyagarbha to become a separate individual. The thought wave when Hiranyagarbha originated was different from the thought wave when the separate individual originated. When the thought waves were different, the results would also be different. Due to the difference in the thought waves, Hiranyagarbha and the separate individuals were born with different qualities.

It is not necessary that if one is strong the other also has to be strong. If one were to have a desire for pleasures, the other need not also be like that.

Rama! Hiranyagarbha can get a work done by just a thought about it. The work by a finite individual requires effort and involves a process for completion. That is the way their thought waves are.

Rama: How come we find that some great people get things done without any effort ?

Vasishta: It should be understood in such cases that it was the intention of Hiranyagarbha for the things to happen in that particular way. If Hiranyagarbha desires that such and such work of so and so is to be fulfilled, that gets fulfilled.

Rama! I said that there was no difference between Hiranyagarbha and the finite individual. You want to show that there is a difference in their intentions. Agreed that there is difference in their intentions. But it does not create a difference in the substance. In order to understand this, you need to know who is a finite individual (*jīva*) and what is meant by life-force (*prāṇa*) and what is a sense organ (*indriya*).

When the sense that "I am a separate self (*ahamkāra*)" arises in Consciousness (*caitanya*), Consciousness becomes a finite individual. He is the doer (*karta*) from then on.

1. When there is a movement (*spandana*) in Consciousness, It becomes *prāna* or life-force. It is action (*kriya*).

2. The nature of a doer is 'doing' (action (*kriya*)). There is no difference between the doer and his nature (the quality of doing). Hence there is no difference between the finite individual and life-force (*jīva* and *prāna*).

3. Mind is the conditioning entity for Consciousness for becoming a finite individual.

4. The mind gets the name of that particular sense organ when it occupies that specific sensory sphere.

Owing to the difference in the means of conditioning, there appears to be a difference in qualities though there is no difference in the substance. Therefore, a non-existent difference appears to be existent.

पल्लवान्तरलेखौघसंनिवेशवदाततम् ।।

pallavāntaralekhaughasaṃniveśavadātatam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 14, Sloka 81

Take a tender leaf and put it upside down. When it is upside down, it still is a leaf. Pointing your finger to the leaf, if you ask anybody what it is, they will reply that they are veins. Nobody will say it is a leaf. Simply because they said so, it does not mean that the veins and the leaf are different. If *brahman* is the leaf, the veins are the world. They may appear to be distinct; but they are not different.

All the subtle points we discussed so far can be better appreciated through a story rather than through argument. So let me tell you the story of Leela.

23. Story of Leela

[**Note:** This is a very long story extending to 46 *sarga*-s. It has two names – *līlopākhyāna* (Story of Leela) and *maṇḍapopākhyāna* (Story of a Shanty).There are many beautiful and poetic descriptions as well as enthralling and dense metaphysical discussions in the story. We shall present here an abridged story giving importance to the philosophical exposition.]

There was a King by name Padmaraja. His Queen was Leela. They were very loving and affectionate towards each other. They used to spend their time happily together. As days went by, with progress in age, Queen Leela was worried about their future. Her concern was that they might not be able to live happily as they reach old age. She was also scared that it would be difficult for her to live alone if her husband were to die earlier than herself. She consulted great scholars and intellectuals in the Kingdom on how to avoid death.

While expressing gratitude for the felicitations shown by the queen, the scholars, however, did not mince their words. They said "No one can escape death. Every one born is destined to die. No austerities or other observations can stop death." After listening to the opinion of the knowledgeable Pundits, Leela assessed the only option open to her in the following way:

"If I die before my husband dies, I will not have to face any sorrow. If my husband dies earlier than me, I should see that his dead spirit does not leave my house. We will then continue to see each other. It can go on like that till my death. That is the only way open to me. My favourite Goddess Saraswati can grant me such a boon. I shall undertake rigorous rituals and worship the goddess from today with this wish. But if my husband comes to know of it, he will not allow me. So for his welfare, I shall conduct the rituals secretly."

After deciding so, Leela started to worship Goddess Saraswati intensely. Her fasting, charities, and meditations multiplied several fold as time went by. She went on with this worship for 300 days. Goddess Saraswati finally manifested before Leela and asked her to express her desire.

Queen Leela told her: "Mother ! My wish is that my husband's spirit after his death should not leave my palace. Whenever I request for your appearance in this regard, you should oblige me."

Goddess Saraswati, the personification of knowledge, granted her the boon and disappeared. Queen Leela was very happy.

Eventually, King Padma died. Queen Leela was so deeply drowned in sorrow that she even forgot to pray to Goddess Saraswati. The Goddess, being very compassionate, spoke to Leela in an invisible voice: “Leela ! Keep the body of your husband in flowers. The flowers may wither, but your husband’s body will stay fresh. He will be your husband once again. His spirit will not leave your palace’.

These words were heard not only by Leela, but also by all her relatives, ministers and other members of the royalty. So, they kept the body of King Padma in flowers and kept a vigil to see what would happen. However, slowly every one of them fell asleep. Queen Leela did not sleep. She prayed to Goddess Saraswati and requested for her appearance. The Goddess manifested before Leela as per the boon.

She consoled the queen saying, “Why do you cry, my child, the illusory world is like a mirage. There is nothing to cry over such things.”

But Leela could not adapt herself to that philosophical view. She pleaded with the Goddess: “Mother ! Where is my husband now ? How is he ? What is he doing? I cannot live without him. Please take me to him.”

24. Three Spaces

The Goddess was not moved by the sorrowful pleas of Leela. She told Leela in a stern voice: “My dear! There are three types of spaces. The first is the mind-space (**चित्ताकाश** cittākāśa). The second is Consciousness-space (**चिदाकाश** cidākāśa). The third is the space of the world (**लोकाकाश** lokākāśa). The space of the world is a void. It is empty. The mind-space is more of a void than the space of the world. Consciousness-space is much more of a void compared to the other two. Your husband is in Consciousness-space.”

The cryptic words of Goddess Saraswati require detailed explanation. She said that there were three spaces. What exactly is space ? Space is that which enables the things to exist within it. This characteristic can readily be well observed within the space of the world.

Where is the space of the world located? It has been established many times that the entire world exists within the mind of the individual. In other words, the space of the world is within the mind of the individual. In other words, the mind allows the space of the world to exist within it. As per this definition of space, mind is also, therefore, a space. It can hence be called the mind-space.

Out of the world-space and mind-space, space of the mind has to be more subtle and void than the space of the world because the latter exists within the former.

But the mind is itself within the Pure Consciousness. In other words, Pure Consciousness allows the mind to exist within It. Therefore, as per the definition of space, Pure Consciousness is also a space. It is called the Consciousness-space. Since it contains the space of mind, the Consciousness-space has to be subtler and more void than the space of mind.

Goddess Saraswati told Leela that her husband was in Consciousness- space. The Goddess continued further:

“Leela ! You are repeatedly asking the whereabouts of your husband and how he is. There is only one answer to all your questions. Your husband is in Consciousness-space. He is that Consciousness. You focus your attention on Consciousness-space. You will be able to see it, enter it and experience it. Leela! I will tell you what Consciousness-space is. The following verse gives the definition and it is considered to be very significant in Vedantic teaching.

25. Definition of Consciousness-Space

देशाद्देशान्तरप्राप्तौ संविदो मध्यमेव यत् ।
निमिषेण चिदाकाशं तद्विद्धि वरवर्णिनि ।।

deśāddeśāntaraprāptau saṃvido madhyameva yat |
nimiṣeṇa cidākāśaṃ tadviddhi varavarṇini ||
Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 17, Sloka 12

samvit means a thought wave. It is the mind. Let us say that first the thought 'pot' has come to mind. Then another thought of a tree occurred. How much time is required for the 'thought wave' to move from the pot to the tree? Only a fraction of a second. Here, a fraction of a second means very little or a miniscule amount of time. What is present in the time when the 'thought' is moving from the pot to the tree ? We cannot say that there is an ordinary space between two thoughts, for the space of the world can not be present in the midst of the mind. So, the space present between the thought of pot and the thought of tree is Consciousness-space or *cidākāśa*.

Say, a person was sorrowful. But soon he became happy. Between these two experiences, there should be an experience which is neither of them. And that is Consciousness-space.

Let me give you another example. Suppose a person is sleeping in the open air on a summer night. At about midnight when he woke up and opened his eyes he saw the moon in the sky. How much time did it take him to see the moon after opening his eyes? Maybe a fraction of a fraction of a second. Where was Brahman during that time? He was at one end in the form of a thought wave in the mind of the seer and at the other end in the sky in the form of the moon. So in-between the moon and mind, during that fraction of a time *brahman* was without any form, i.e. he was formless. The formless *brahman* is called Consciousness-space or *cidākāśa*.

"Leela! There is only one way to reach the *cidākāśa*. Get rid of all the intentions from your mind. When there are no thoughts in you, what remains is the Consciousness-space. You will be that.

In other words, the world should not exist at all in your thoughts if you like to get firmly established in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa*. After all, what is the world? It is nothing but your thoughts. The thoughts arise because of the impressions from past actions (*vāsana*-s) and they in turn come due to ignorance. So when you get rid of the ignorance in you, the world will not be there at all. Practice this to attain that state.

It is the only way to enter चिदाकाश *cidākāśa*. There is no other path. But it is not an easy route. However, with the boon bestowed by me, you will reach it easily. Go for it."

26. Experiencing Consciousness-Space

With those words, Goddess Saraswati disappeared. Queen Leela continued her meditation. Soon she went into a thoughtless state (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). Within no time she lost the feeling "I am my body." She reached the चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* like a bird flying away from a tree.

The queen saw her husband in Consciousness-space. She also found her palace there as well as the royal court and the throne. King Padma was seated on the throne, surrounded by his ministers, servants, and other inhabitants of the Kingdom.

Leela entered the court hall. She moved around the hall. She was able to see everyone but nobody seemed to recognize her. Everybody was busy with their own work. The people present in the palace were her people and her attendants only. She had no doubt in that. But the King Padma appeared to be a lad of mere sixteen. Yet, he was performing his functions as an adept ruler.

The scenario in front of her eyes kicked off a new stream of thoughts in her mind.

Her thoughts ran as follows: "None of the people are able to recognise me. Perhaps, I am not visible to them. My husband who was sixty years old appears now to be sixteen years old. I wonder who these servants are. Could it be that they were also dead and are reborn in their present form?"

Leela awoke from her deep meditative state when the above thoughts arose in her mind. She was also helped by the grace bestowed by the Goddess Saraswati. She found all the attendants of the court to be asleep. She also saw the body of her husband which was kept in flowers. She was totally confused.

She questioned herself: "What is happening ? I did not sleep. So, I could not have dreamt. What I saw a while ago was different from what I see now. Which is true ? Are the servants truly alive ? Or is it that they are dead and are reborn ?"

She could not resolve the conundrum. After some reflection over the matter, she called her principal attendants and asked them to convene immediately a meeting of the ministers, satraps and other royal dignitaries. Everyone was surprised by her command to assemble at such a short notice. As she had the supreme authority now, they obeyed her orders .

Leela seated herself on a smaller chair next to the royal throne in the assembly hall. She kept staring silently at all the people for a while. The assembled nobility felt that the queen convened the meeting in her deep anguish. They could make out from her long silent stares at them, that she had really no message to deliver. They sympathised with her strange condition. The queen suddenly ended the meeting and went back to her chambers.

Leela sat beside her husband's body. Her thoughts went as follows :

"A short while ago, by the grace of Saraswati, I was in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa*. I saw these very people there in my meditation. After coming out of the *samādhi*, I see these people here again. It is the same palace, same buildings, same people and the same cities in both the situations. They are like mirror reflections of one another. Which is real and which is the image ? What is reality and what is imagined ? I am unable to understand. I shall ask Goddess Saraswati."

27. Which is Real?

With those thoughts in mind, Leela prayed to Goddess Saraswati. Saraswati appeared before her. But she came this time as a ten year old girl. Still Leela could recognize her, paid her respects and then posed a question.

Leela: Mother ! New doubts cropped up in me. I humbly request you to, please, clarify to me. By your grace, I could see चिदाकाश *cidākāśa*. It was enormous like the sky and as clear as a mirror. The four quarters, time, many worlds, *niyati* (an intrinsic organizational order within things) and so on were present in that. But everything there appears like reflected images of the previous world. Of the two, which one is real and which is an image ? Kindly let me know."

For any discussion to be meaningful, the terms used should be clearly defined. Often questions would arise when there is absence of clarity in expression. Because of this, Goddess Saraswati asked Leela.

Saraswati: "You mentioned that there were two worlds – a real one and an unreal one. What do you mean by the words 'real' and 'unreal'?"

Leela: (After a little reflection replied): "Mother! Both of us are here, surrounded by these objects. This is all real. A short while ago, in my deep meditation, I saw the world in which my husband was present. It was unreal, because the space, time and location were not congenial for their existence. Expressing it in the form of a definition – an object can be said to be real only if it is born under the conditions of favourable space, time and location. It is not real, if these factors are not congenial to its formation".

Saraswati: Well said Leela ! Now let us take a closer look. You had seen the world in the *cidākāśa* where your husband was. Is there a cause for that world to originate ? If the answer is no, it has to be accepted that the effect (*kārya*) has taken place without a cause. And, it is not possible to have an effect without cause. So, we have to say that there is a cause for that world. Is the cause real or unreal?

Let us say that the cause is unreal. What could be the 'unreal' cause? There are only two worlds. One is the world of Consciousness-space and the other is the visible world. There is no scope for a third world other than these two because such a third world has not been seen by anyone nor heard by anyone. So we have to accept that the visible world is the cause for the world of Consciousness-space. Thus, we have come to the conclusion that the ordinary world is the cause for the **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*. Next, we have to find out whether the visible world is real or not.

The visible world is the cause, *cidākāśa* is the effect. Both cause and effect should belong to the same type of reality. It is not possible for them to belong to different types of reality. That is to say that if the cause is unreal, then a real effect can not manifest from it and vice versa.

That means, if one object is real and the other is unreal, there cannot be a cause and effect relationship between them. You say that the ordinary world is real and the **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa* is unreal. It is not possible to assign a cause-effect relation to them. But we cannot deny the cause and effect relation to these two worlds. Hence both these worlds should either be real or unreal.

Leela: (A bit taken aback at the force of logic in the argument of Saraswati who appeared merely to be a little girl, but without losing her own confidence): Both cause and effect need not be of the same kind of reality. A pot is made of a lump of clay. The lump of clay cannot carry water whereas a pot can as per our observation in the world. This shows that the powers of cause and effect can vary. Why can't the realities of cause and effect also vary the same way ?

Saraswati: It is true that the properties of a pot and clay are different. But two pots made out of the same clay cannot have different properties. That means, if multiple effects manifest from the same cause, all those effects have to have the same order of reality.

Let us now consider the two worlds we were discussing. You argue that the normal awake world is causal to **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*. If it is so, the land of this world must have manifested as the land in **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa.* If the land here transformed into the land of **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*, what would be left here? Could such a transformation happen ?

If it did not happen, how else could the land in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* come about ? Because you saw land in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa,* we have to say that it is present there. So we have to find out the causal factor for that.

Let us keep चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* aside for the time being. How was the normal world created ? What is its cause ? We have no doubt that the normal world, the five elements etc. are all born out of ignorance.

We see similarities in both the worlds. Therefore, we have to accept that the चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* is born from the same cause as that of the normal world. Hence we have to agree that the world of चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* is also born out of ignorance. Since both worlds are born out of ignorance, their level of reality should be the same.

Leela: The world I had seen in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* was from my memory. So it was an image in the mind. The objects of that world were not physically present there. But a memory can form only when there was an experience of a real object. That means a real cause must be present behind it. The cause is this external world. That is the reason why I argue that our normal world is real and चिदाकाश *cidākāśa* which is born out of the memory of an experience in this world is unreal.

Saraswati: The external world is also born out of the impressions carried from the past creations. Therefore, it is also unreal, *mithya*.

Leela: I understand now. What you say is true. Both the worlds are unreal.

Saraswati: They are not merely unreal. They appear as if they are there, though they are really non-existent. They are called *mithya*.

Leela: When both the worlds are illusory, kindly explain to me how my husband's world emerged from the awake world.

Saraswati: Leela! I will tell you a small story called '*mandapa upākhyāna*' (the story of a Shanty).

28. The Story of a Shanty

There is a shanty known as 'the manifold' in चिदाकाश *cidākāśa*. Its roof is like a sheet of glass. It is the sky. There are fourteen rooms in the shanty. They are the fourteen worlds. There is an old Brahmin by name Prajapati in the shanty. He has innumerable children.

There is a small village in a corner of the shanty.

तस्मिन्नदीशैलवनोपगूढे साग्निः सदारः सुतवानरोगः ।
गोक्षीरवान् राजभयाद्विमुक्तः सर्वातिथिर्धर्मपरो द्विजोऽभूत् ।।

tasminnadīśailavanopagūḍhe sāgniḥ sadāraḥ sutavānarogaḥ |
gokṣīravān rājabhayādvimuktaḥ sarvātithirdharmaparo dvijo'bhūt ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 18, Sloka 38

A Brahmin with many children and cattle lived in that village. He used to cordially serve food to many guests. His name was Vasishta.

29. The Story of Vasishta Brahmana

Vasishta brāhmaṇa was as great as Maharshi Vasishta in his conduct and observance of austerities. He had a pious wife. Her name was Arundhati. She was like Arundhathi, the wife of Maharshi Vasishta, in her nature.

The couple were resting one day on a hillside when a King who was on a hunting trip reached their place. On seeing the grandeur and splendour of the King's entourage, the Brahmin horripilated. He fancied himself for a while to be a King moving around with a harem of beautiful damsels. He lived for many days after this event observing meticulously the ordained religious practices. However, the desire to be a King was stuck in his heart.

Finally the Brahmin's time was up. He was on his death bed. Knowing this, his wife was scared. She had been a long time devotee of mine. She prayed to me. I appeared before her and asked her what her desire was. She was a bit more intelligent than you. She said that death was inevitable to all human beings. Hence it was okay for her husband to die, but she desired that his spirit should not leave their house. I granted her the boon. Eventually her husband passed away. His spirit remained in their home in a subtle form. Because of the strong desire he had in his mind, he became a powerful King right in that hut itself. His dead body was still there. His wife was inconsolable in sorrow. She wept and wept at the tragedy. She could not take it anymore. Her heart failed. She died. She went in search of her husband because of her love for him. Finally she found him and joined him.

It is the eighth day since the couple had passed away. Their house, lands and other property are still as they are on the mountainside. Their spirits are also there in their house.

NowI reveal to you a great secret. You were that Arundhati ! Vasishta Brahmana was your husband. He was the King Padma. That was your past world. You had earlier seen two worlds. This is the third one. Even this is *mithya*. Does not matter where a world happens to be, if it is seen it is an unreal world. It is not that one is real and another is unreal.

Goddess Saraswati paused for a little while after speaking thus.

30. The Kingdom In A Hut

Leela: (After a short reflection on what she heard from the Goddess): Mother ! What you say sounds quite incredulous. It does not look probable. How can our vast empire be present within a small hut in a village ? How can the immense world of my husband fit into my bedroom? I had seen huge rivers, mountain ranges, the four quarters and so on in **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*. Do you mean to say that all those things were present within my room? I am unable to comprehend what you say. Will you please explain to help me comprehend your discourse ?

Saraswati: Please bear in mind that it was I myself who promulgated the law that none should speak untruth. Would I violate my own rule?

The finite individual (*jīva*) within Brahmin Vasishta attained the form of **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa* right in that very house within that village. As **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*, he is taking care of a huge empire. You were both overtaken by sleep called 'death.' That is the reason you are unable to recollect the past. When you are in a dream, do you remember the preceding awake state ?

You witness several worlds in a dream, all in your mind. You see mirages in a desert. They may appear, but we cannot say that they really exist. Similarly, it does not necessarily mean that the vast empire witnessed by Brahmin Vasishta in his hut really existed.

Consciousness is present inside the five sheaths.That is the only thing that is true. Because it is truly existent, the unreal world is able to appear superimposed on it. Only in this way the various worlds, the oceans, the lands, the mountains, the rivers and so on appear within the Consciousness-space of that Brahmin individual who is moving around the Brahmin's house.

Actually there is no surprise here. Extend this process along the timeline in your imagination. Imagine the current life of yours occurring in your mind in your past life. The current world would be within the bedroom of your past life. The world of your past life and the bedroom therein would be present in the bedroom of still previous life. All these are in another room of yet another previous birth. One can go on imagining like this with no end.
`

परमाणौ परमाणौ सन्ति वत्से चिदात्मनि ।
अन्तरन्तर्जगन्तीति किंत्वेतन्नाम शङ्क्यते ।।

paramāṇau paramāṇau santi vatse cidātmani |
antarantarjagantīti kiṃtvetannāma śaṅkyate ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 20, Sloka 26

Thus, within each subatomic particle, Consciousness is present. All these worlds exist telescoped within that. This is the truth. There is no need to doubt it.

31. An Epoch In A Second

Leela: Mother ! You said that the Brahmin died only 8 days back. But my husband and I were born around 60 years ago. How can that be our previous birth ? How will you account for the difference in the time period?

Saraswati: Oh, what a question ! I thought you were intelligent enough. After a long discussion with me., you accepted the fact that many worlds could be accommodated within an atom

When it is possible for the worlds to be telescoped into an atom spatially, is it not possible for years, decades, centuries, eons, epochs, Yugas and *kalpa*s to be telescoped into a second temporally?

Please appreciate that Consciousness is invariant both in time and space dimensions.

Let's come back to the question of how it is possible for the immensely humongous worlds to fit into the Consciousness-space within an atom. It is possible because all the worlds are merely fancied to be present. They are like water in a mirage. Just like space in the world is imaginary, so also time is an imagination.

To think that I am so many years old is as illusory as thinking that I am the son or daughter of so and so.

From the perspective of Consciousness, there is no difference between the dream world and wakeful world. There is no difference in these worlds with respect to time also. Therefore, there is no difference between the present world and the next one. Time is not experienced in the same way by all even in the present world.

A newly married boy feels his wife's absence for a day as if it is a year. Hence you need not entertain any doubt from the point of time.

32. Impressions–Memory–Imagination

Saraswati: (Continuing her teaching): Leela ! We concluded earlier that the world was an illusion. How did the illusion arise ? We see in this world many illusions like the snake on a rope and silver in nacre. That means we see something but recall from our memory something seen elsewhere. Based on this, some people argue that the world is also an imagination like recalling in our memory a past experience. But that is not the correct picture. Know that the world is in the form of a memory for some people, it is a new imagination for some others and it is a mix of both in the case of yet others.

For example, if one dreams of his own death, we cannot say that he had the experience of his death in the past and therefore, he dreamt of his death. Or take the case of a man who dreamt that he was born as the son of another man. We cannot say that he was indeed the son of the other man at some time or other and so, dreamt accordingly.

Let me give you another example. Think of the Creator, Prajapati. Elders say that this world is the dream of Prajapati. Does he dream of this world because of a memory of it or is it a new experience? If it were to be based on his memory, we have to admit that he had the experience of creating worlds like this previously and based on that memory he created this world. But the Vedas declare that the Creator of the previous epoch attained *nirvāṇa* at the end of that epoch itself. So we cannot say that the new Creator had an experience from the past creations. Hence we have to agree that the creation of this world is a novel experience of the new Creator.

Through all these examples I want to tell you that for some people, the world is a memory from past experience and to some others it is a new experience. Memory means an experience that has been retained in the mind. A memory retained in the mind, irrespective of whatever way it has formed, leaves an impression on the mind. The impression so left in the mind becomes its own impediment to freedom.

Therefore, liberation is to pretermit the impression of the world which is nothing but a memory. To pretermit is to disregard remembering it. The remembrance is caused by ignorance. Hence getting rid of ignorance is the way to avoid remembering.

How does one get rid of ignorance ? There are two approaches suggested as a solution. One approach says that ignorance can be gotten rid of by acquiring the Knowledge of the Self. The other approach holds that it can be done through the control of the mind.

The mind-control-advocates argue that the thought waves in the mind will subside through the control of mind. Once the thoughts get quietened, the world is not experienced anymore. They opine that that state itself is liberation. But it is like getting rid of a devil. There is no guarantee that another devil will not possess you. Similarly there is no guarantee that the thought waves will not return again. Therefore, this method does not yield a permanent solution to the problem.

In contrast to the above solution, obtaining the Knowledge of the Self eradicates ignorance for good. Once ignorance is removed, the root cause for the appearance of the worldly illusion is gone forever. Imagining the superimposition of the world on the Self does not occur again. Hence attainment of Self-Knowledge is the prime and only method !

So, Leela, understand that both space and time are illusory and, therefore, strive for the attainment of The Knowledge of the Self.

Leela: (After attentively listening to the Goddess) Mother ! You said that the impressions from the past actions were the cause for birth. Impressions take shape from an actual experience. Without experiencing a thing, there cannot be an impression about it.

We were a Brahmin couple in our previous birth. We did not have the experience of being a royalty in that birth. How could we be born as rulers (Kings) in this birth ? One might say that space and time are imaginary. But there cannot be a birth in the absence of impressions from past experiences.

[**Note:** Swami Shri Ananda Bodhendra Saraswati, the commentator whose text we are following here, provided in his glossary detailed explanation to the above question drawing material from sources other than Yoga Vasishta. We shall integrate that additional information also in our summarization below for the sake of greater clarity.]

Saraswati: Leela! Both *samskāra* (impressions from past experiences) and *vāsana* (tendencies as a result of the actions done in the past) are one and the same. We cannot say for sure that impressions come exclusively from past experience. They may also arise from an *ādiavidya* (beginningless ignorance). We can thus have two types of impressions – those that come from past experiences and those that arise from beginningless ignorance. Either can be a cause for birth.

You both happened to see a King in your past lives, and then had a strong desire to become the rulers. Consequently, you were born as a royalty. That is the way the impressions from the beginningless ignorance act. There is also another explanation.

The Creator Brahma, our great ancestor, is omniscient. He knew in advance about your desire and the type of next birth you would get as a result of that desire. In other words, the Creator had already experienced your future birth. This experience was the cause for an impression to take shape in him. That impression in turn was responsible for your birth as a royal couple.

Leela: If so, we can extend the same argument and say that Brahma was also born because of the impressions in Him. We can also say that he is knowledgeable of his future births as he is omniscient.

Saraswati: No, we cannot say so. The Creator of the previous *kalpa* does not exist anymore, nor His impressions. He was fully liberated at the end of that *kalpa* itself. So there are no impressions to be carried forward. It is a new Creator in the present *kalpa*. The new Creator could not have had any past experiences. Therefore, He could not have been born because of His impressions. The birth of the new Brahma is a mere coincidence and an illusion. It has no cause behind it. Hence, what He created is also a mere figment of imagination.

33. Cause and Effect Relationship

Saraswati: Leela! There is another important point to be noted here. Our thinking process goes entirely by cause and effect relationships. But is that relationship between a cause and effect a mere presumption or true ? When examined critically, you will find that causality as a relationship is non-existent. There is no relationship between a cause and an effect. It is an unverified assumption. It is just an imagination.

Look at the causal factor. Take the case of clay and the pot. You assume sub-consciously without you yourself being aware that the clay and the pot are two different things. Based on that, you deduce that clay is the cause for the pot. In contrast, suppose you begin with the knowledge that the pot is also only clay and there is no difference between them. Then the thought that 'one is the cause and the other is the effect' will not arise at all in your mind. Therefore, the cause-effect relationship is something that we imagine; it is not real by itself.

Now extend the above logic to *brahman* and the world. If you think that *brahman* and the world are different, one becomes the cause and the other the effect. If you see them to be non-different, the question of cause-effect relationship between them does not arise.

Leela: I am now relieved of all my doubts. I express my gratitude to you from the bottom of my heart for the kind elucidation. I have a desire to see my old house where I lived when I was a Brahmin lady. Please take me there.

Saraswati: Your gross physical body is an impediment that stands in the way of fulfilling your wish. The body is yours as long as you are aware of it. The moment you forget it, it is not yours. *samādhi* is a way to forget the physical body. So go into *samādhi* one more time. You will be then in the subtler body. In that body, you will be able to visit the world of the Brahmin in Consciousness-space.

Leela: Why can't I see that world with the physical body?

Saraswati: We have already established that this world or the world of the Brahmin or the dream world, every one of them is an imagination only. You show a ring and say that it is your ring. But actually you show only gold. That's actually what is there. But what about the ring ? 'Ring' is just a word of convention for transactional purposes. There is no actual 'thing' called a ring. Similarly, what exactly is there is only *brahman*. There is no world. The world is for transactional purposes only. Therefore, the world is an imagination. The really real 'thing' is *brahman*.

अत्र प्रमाणं वेदान्ता गुरवोऽनुभवस्तथा ।।

atra pramāṇaṃ vedāntā guravo'nubhavastathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 21, Sloka 35

The three ways to know - 1. Upanishads, 2. Word of the elders, 3. One's own experience.

Though the entire creation is undoubtedly an imagination, there are certain internal differences within it. The differences were a result of the thought waves in Brahma, the Creator, at the beginning of the creation. For example, one can experience the gross world through the gross physical body, the subtle world through the subtle body and the Consciousness-space through Consciousness-body (*cinmaya dehaṃ*). This is an irrevocable rule. None can change it. But those who have perfect Self-Knowledge can see both the world and *Brahman* simultaneously as One through practice. Hiranyagarbha, myself and a few others come in this category. You are not able to witness even the subtle worlds like the Gandharvaloka with your body. Therefore, you will not be able to see the imaginary worlds of others within the Consciousness-space with your gross body. You have to get into *samādhi* and obtain the Consciousness-body.

34. Swift Bodies (*ātivāhika śarīra*)

Leela: Mother ! You have agreed that we could both go to the mountain village of the Brahmin. I shall leave the gross body and proceed with my pure Consciousness-body. But how would you be able to come in the present body of yours?

Saraswati: You have a body made out of the five elements. You consider it to be quite dense and solid. It is so only from your point of view. As a matter of fact, it is just a void. But you have neither that awareness nor that perspective. I do not take my body to be solid. There is no need for me to leave my body. This body morphs into a subtle body as easily as water mixes with water, air with air and fire with fire.

Leela: If my body is just a void why does it not also merge into the subtle body like yours ?

Saraswati: As I already said, we are different. I do not see my body as composed of the five elements. My body is like a reflection in the mirror. I look upon it as Consciousness due to my long practice. Your position is the total opposite of this.You take your body to have a physicality and solidity to it. You think it is not Consciousness. It is so because you are habituated to think that way. My body is like the virtual image of a mountain in a mirror. Your body is like an actual mountain on the ground. Unless you drop that physical body through *samAdhi*, you cannot approach the mountain village. As your perception gradually changes and you begin to view your body to be non- different from Consciousness, you will have a swift body like mine. A swift body is a very subtle body. It is entirely mental.

Leela: Once the impressions from past actions get annihilated and I obtain the swift body, what will happen to my gross body? Will it change into the subtle body or will it be destroyed?

Saraswati: If *samādhi* is properly practised, the impressions will dissolve. The physical body then attains subtlety. It will not be destroyed.

The word 'destroyed' is not very apt in the above context. Suppose you saw a snake in place of a rope. Later under proper illumination you see that it is a rope and not a snake. Can you say that the snake is destroyed or dead? Or can you even say that the snake is not destroyed? We cannot use such a terminology because unless there was a real snake to start with. Similarly when once the impressions are dissolved, we cannot say that the gross body is destroyed or that it is not destroyed. We can only say that it is simply not seen.
That's all.

After the attainment of Self-Knowledge, it can be said that the body will be like a 'burnt out cloth' i.e. it may appear as a cloth, but it is actually only ash. Similarly, the body may have a form, but it is only a void.

Leela: Goddess Saraswati! You and others like you have always the awareness that your body is pure Consciousness. To such a pure Consciousness, there will not be any attachment with the seen. How can such a pure Consciousness take the form of a world ?

Saraswati: Hiranyagarbha appeared first at the beginning of the creation. Then Consciousness (*caitanya*) got the quality of 'knowing.' Hiranyagarbha later created gross objects. Consciousness, in the process of knowing the objects, simultaneously attained the gross form owing to illusion.

Leela: Mother ! Pure Consciousness has no relation to space and time. When space and time did not exist, how can it be said that Hiranyagarbha was the first changeless change of Consciousness ? When we say something originated first, does it not imply that there is a time line present already?

Saraswati: Does a ring exist separate from the gold ? Does a wave exist separate from the waters ? No. But we do see a ring in the gold and a wave in the waters. That means, even if there is an appearance, it does not really exist. Likewise, though there may be an appearance within Consciousness, what is 'seen' has no existence. Can we speak in terms of a time scale simply because we used the word 'first,' when the thing itself does not exist ? So the question of time does not arise at all.

35. Inquiry is The Remedy

Leela: What you say is very logical ! It is quite convincing. But people like us are lost in the illusion of duality. Who is it that is making us struggle in the dual – nondual quandary?

Saraswati: It is none other than your own lack of inquiry. It is the absence of discrimination. It may even be called ignorance.

Because the root cause is the absence of inquiry, the solution lies in conducting proper inquiry. A thorough investigation will reveal to you that *avicāra* (lack of inquiry) – *vicāra* (proper inquiry); *avidyā* (ignorance) – *vidyā* (Self-Knowledge); bondage – liberation do not actually exist !

Leela! You should begin proper inquiry. The polar pair of opposites such as the likes-dislikes, love-hatred etc. are the seeds for the cycles of life and death. They will be annihilated with proper inquiry and you will soon attain a thoughtless state. You will abide in *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

Let me tell you this. You woke up from sleep. You realized that what all you had experienced in your sleep was a dream.What happened to the dream world and your dream body ? You understand that they never existed. Similarly after obtaining the Self-Knowledge with the annihilation of the impressions from past actions, the gross body of the awake state will be understood to be non-existent.

You are aware of the gross body after the dream body is gone. Likewise after the belief in the gross body goes, the awareness of subtle swift body (*ātivāhika deha*) prevails.

स्वप्ने निर्वासनाबीजे यथोदेति सुषुप्तता ।
जाग्रत्यवासनाबीजे तथोदेति विमुक्तता ।।

svapne nirvāsanābīje yathodeti suṣuptatā |
jāgratyavāsanābīje tathodeti vimuktatā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 22, Sloka 4

Deep sleep (*suṣupti*) arises with the ending of the impressions of the dream world. Liberation arises with the ending of the impressions of the awake world.

Let me give you a few important definitions at this stage.

1. Sleep with active impressions is a dream.
2. Sleep after the impressions are quietened is deep sleep (*suṣupti*).
3. The wakeful state with temporarily subdued impressions is fainting or infatuation.
4. When the impressions are totally eradicated with their roots, it is *turīya.* It comes after the attainment of Self-Knowledge.
5. Those who are alive and abide in *turīya* are known as *jIvanmukta*-s (liberated in this life). People who are not liberated cannot understand their condition.
6. The mind of a *jīvanmukta* is a swift (*ātivāhika*) mind.

Only the *ātivāhika* mind can mix with the minds from other worlds, minds of previous lives, minds of accomplished people (*siddha*-s), and gods.

Leela ! Please make an effort for the annihilation of the impressions. You will then be a *jīvanmukta.* You will then have Consciousness-body. You can visit the other worlds in that body along with me. There is no compromise in this. It is immaterial whether any one blesses you or curses you, this rule cannot be contravened.

Everyone gets *ātivāhika deha* after death. They move to the other worlds in that body. But they themselves are not aware of it. Their relatives never know it and stay crying beside the dead body.

36. Detachment without Self-Knowledge is Useless

Leela: You have given me a very enlightening discourse. You advised me to take up annihilation of impressions (*vāsana*-s). How do I do it and what is the procedure I have to adopt ? Kindly clarify.

Saraswati:

तच्चिन्तनं तत्कथनमन्योन्यं तत्प्रबोधनम् ।
एतदेकपरत्वं च तदभ्यासं विदुर्बुधाः ।।

taccintanaṃ tatkathanamanyonyaṃ tatprabodhanam |
etadekaparatvaṃ ca tadabhyāsaṃ vidurbudhāḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 22, Sloka 24

The wise say that by thinking always about it, discussing it with others, proclaiming it to yourself always, by singularly committing yourself to that thought and by practice *(it is achieved)*

[**Note:** A verse similar to the above occurs in Bhagavad-Gita also. It is quite common to find same or similar words being used by different authors in the ancient times in their works when certain Vedantic topics are discussed. This is not plagiarism or violation of copyrights. On the contrary it stands as proof to say that the same words get expressed through the mouths of noble people when they talk of similar concepts in Vedanta.]

Leela! There are four ways of practice that can be adopted for the annihilation of the impressions. They are :

1. Constant mental reflection on the subject.
2. Talking about it all the time.
3. Discussing It with fellow seekers.
4. Unswerving focus on It without diversion.

Each one of them and all the four together are good methods of practice. If the four are adopted together they work to reinforce each other which leads to rapid progress.

The first method of churning the issue in the mind brings clarity to the matter. The second one of talking with knowledgeable people reassures and improves our confidence. The third step of discussions with fellow seekers helps us in learning new things, clears our doubts and firms up our understanding. The fourth step of unswerving focus eliminates contradictory thoughts.

The seeker intending to follow the above methods should have dispassion towards all worldly activities. He should study Vedantic scriptures. He should understand that all perceivables are only *mithya.* He should be interested only in the Supreme Self.

Some seekers stubbornly pursue detachment, observe austerities and meditational practices without first getting rid of their likes and dislikes or understanding the illusory nature of the world. The likes and dislikes rebel against them one day. Therefore, it is most advisable that the seeker gets rid of his likes and dislikes on priority by understanding that whatever is perceived is totally illusory.

[**Note:** Leela was very happy to listen to the above sermon of the Goddess. She began her meditation and soon went into *samādhi*. Goddess Saraswati too went back into her natural state of *samādhi*. After a short while Leela attained the Consciousness-body. Goddess Saraswati stood by her side in her natural body. Both of them freely roamed in the Consciousness-space. Sage Vasishta who narrated the conversation between Leela and the Goddess resumed his discourse with Rama.]

37. The Universe in A Tiny Room

Sage Vasishta: Both Goddess Saraswati and Leela were wandering around in the space of the small room in that very house. They did not go anywhere else. But they had the experience of travelling for millions of miles, thanks to the thought waves. Though their bodies were space-like, they were able to see each other. They were moving together like friends holding hands. They were running, jumping and flying. They were really enjoying themselves.

Both of them witnessed vast spaces. They experienced a cool breeze. They saw the cloud sphere. They saw the celestial river of space (*ākāśaganga*), mountains, angels and their abodes. They noticed the Sun rising in some places and setting in some other places.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki described the Consciousness-space in 65 verses in this *sarga*.]

Leela and Saraswati returned towards the earth after spending considerable time. They could see the entire earth very clearly. They could see the land area surrounded by the seven seas, mountain ranges and rivers and so on. Finally they left the world of King Padma and entered the world of Brahmin Vasishta. They reached the Mountain village in that world. They were invisible to the people in the village. They observed the hut without the master, the ladies in tears and men in gloom.

38. Fulfilment of Intentions (*satya saṃkalpa siddhi*)

A thought flashed in Leela's mind. She wished that her relatives assembled in the hut should be able to see the two of them as normal human beings. As a result of her practice of meditation she already obtained the powers to convert her thoughts into a reality. But she was unaware of her own powers. So the moment the thought came to her mind, the people gathered there were able to see them both. The people considered them to be heavenly beings and were extremely happy to see them. Surprisingly the trees which dried up began to sprout tender leaves and withered flowers looked fresh again.

Looking at these changes, Brahmin Vasishta's eldest son, Jyeshta Sharma, felt very happy. He prostrated before them and welcomed them with flowers. Leela enquired for the reason of their grief. He replied that both of his parents had died almost at the same time and they were loved and respected by their family and the entire village. He said that they were all grief-stricken by the loss of his parents. He begged Leela and Saraswati to redeem their sorrow. Leela responded with compassion and touched his forehead. Immediately, not only Jyesta Sharma but everyone in the congregation felt relieved of their sadness.

Rama: (Interrupting Sage Vasishta's narration) Teacher, Jyeshta Sharma is her own son. She could have appeared to him in his mother's form and consoled him. Why didn't she do that?

Vasishta: Rama! Ordinary humans think that their gross bodies are real. They think in terms of their relationships - relatives, friends and foes and strangers. Leela is now a liberated individual. The world appears as *mithya* to liberated people. They do not consider some as related and some others as unrelated. The entire world is Consciousness for them. As Leela is liberated, she does not have the attachment towards anyone or the feeling of 'my son.' She touched the forehead of Jyeshta Sharma not because of her motherly feelings towards him but as a mark of appreciation of his observation of austerities and to bless him with Self-Knowledge out of compassion. Soon after the above incident, both Leela and Saraswati resumed their Consciousness-bodies and disappeared. They resumed their conversation which went as follows:

Saraswati: You learnt what you ought to know. You have the direct experiential Knowledge now whereas you had merely the scriptural knowledge earlier. Please ask me if you need any further clarification.

Leela: Mother! I visited the world of my husband after his death. I was invisible there to all the people. However, in this mountain village I was visible to all and I spoke to my son also. What is the reason for this difference?

Saraswati: At the time you visited your husband's world, you had not fully gained the experience of Self-Knowledge. You had not fully realized the illusory nature of the world. Until you attain complete Knowledge of the Self, you cannot have the ability of realizing your intentions (*satya sankalpatva*). Being in duality, you continue to have the sense of separation and think you are Leela. To be as *brahman* with Self-Knowledge is like being under a cool shade. You will not have the dualistic sense. You possess *satya sankalpatva.* Your son could see you because of your intention. If you go now to the world of your husband, whatever your thoughts are, you will be able to realize them.

Leela: Goddess Saraswati ! I seem to get it now. Let me summarize:

1. The Brahmin was my husband in this house.
2. He died and was reborn as the King here only
3. His Kingdom was within that house.
4. I was his queen right here.
5. My husband, the King, died in this house.
6. The house itself is now the palace-space.
7. The King attained liberation in this space.
8. He became another King right here only.
9. His second Kingdom is also here.
10. In conclusion, it looks to me that the different worlds exist within the space of the house in this village like soap bubbles in a bathtub (or mustard seeds in a basket).

Kindly educate me further to bless me with absolute clarity on the subject and take me to the domain of my previous husband.

Saraswati: My dear daughter! You have had hundreds of husbands. The three mentioned by you are the latest. The Brahmin was already cremated. The second one, King Padma, is a dead body. The third is presently the ruler of his Kingdom. To whom should I take you?

अन्य एव हि संसारः सोऽन्यो ब्रह्माण्डमण्डपः ।
अन्या एव तता वत्से व्यवहारपरम्पराः ।।

anya eva hi saṃsāraḥ so'nyo brahmāṇḍamaṇḍapaḥ |
anyā eva tatā vatse vyavahāraparamparāḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 27, Sloka 26

Bondage, Consciousness-space and the sequence of worldly events are all distinct entities. Though they may appear to be close to us, they are far remote from us. From the perspective of 'Pure Consciousness,' they are very minute like the seeds of a fig tree. From an empirical view, they are at great distances. Where shall we go ?

39. Past Lives of Leela

Leela: Thank you Mother. I am able to recollect now. I have had 800 lives since I was born from the Creator Brahma. The present birth is neither *sAttvic* nor *tAmasic*. It is in-between - *rājasic* type.

I was a Vidhyadhara lady (a celestial being); later I was born as a female human being owing to reduction in merit; then, I was born as a woman in one hill tribe; after that I was a woman in another tribe. Because of more virtuous deeds, I was born as a prince. I committed certain wrong acts in my governance. Consequently I was born as a female crocodile in a water scarce area and had to suffer much. Later I was born as a cow, as a bird, as an insect, as a deer and as a fish. Afterwards, I took birth again as a tribal woman and again as a celestial lady. I was born as a tortoise, as a Royal Swan, as a mosquito and as a blade of grass. I was born once again as a Vidhyadhara lady. I had gone through several hardships in all these births.

Rama: (Intervening at this stage) Teacher! Elders say that there are boundary walls surrounding the universe and they are as hard as diamonds to penetrate. You said that these two ladies travelled from one world to another. How could they pass through the strong and hard boundary walls?

Vasishta: Rama! How come you raise such a question after you heard everything this far ? Where are these two ladies ? They are in the queen's palace. The mountain village was within it. The Kingdom was located in it and so also the other huge world. Where is the question of another world, travel and walls?

It is like a person in a dream. He sees one dream after another. How far does he really go ? He visits many places which are far away, without actually moving. Similar is the situation here. There are no different worlds, no walls, no travel. The mind conceives them to be present because of ignorance. The mind shows them as though they exist. They appear separated from each other in time and space out of the ignorance of the viewer, like a person in a dream state. The stronger the ignorance of the viewer, the walls separating those worlds appear as impregnable and as hard to break as though they are made of hard diamonds.

Say a person sees a large Kingdom in his dream. Where does that Kingdom exist? We have to admit that it is within the four walls of his bedroom. How can a vast Kingdom fit into a small room? Is there really a Kingdom there ? The universes we conceive are also of the same type !

The word *brahmānda* (the universe) stands for Brahma's conception. When the same thought with the same sort of impressions arises in these people, they also begin to see the same world. There is nothing solid like walls or any such things over there. Now let me proceed with the story.

Leela and Saraswati came out of that house and wandered around the neighborhood. Leela recollected the events in her past life as the Brahmin lady, looking at the familiar surroundings. She described in detail the various incidents to Goddess Saraswati.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki utilized this opportunity to provide a graphic account of the life of Brahmins in a village during those ancient times.]

40. Life of Brahmin Leela

Leela:I had a very lean and thin body in my life as a Brahmin lady. Nevertheless, I liked hosting guests at our house. I used to enjoy cooking food and feeding the visitors. I always strove for the name and fame of my husband. I had many children.

I was perpetually busy with household work. I was sprightly at my work and used to be annoyed that others were sloppy in their jobs. I never thought of questioning about life or the world. My husband was also as naive as me. His only concern was about the votary goods, cordgrass, vegetables and flaggots.

Whenever I had some free time, I used to clean up my children or tidy up the yard. I was very punctilious regarding the behavioural codes and often chided my family members if they did not behave befitting the piousness of our home. Eventually I grew old, developed deafness in my left ear, my head used to shake and I had to use a walking stick to support myself. All these trees you see were planted by me. All these people are my relatives.

Yes, I recall now. My husband always desired to be a King. And he did become a ruler. His spirit is now like the fragrance in the air within the space here. Within this teeny-weeny place exists billions square kilometres of space. All of this looks very surprising to me. It is like magic. Let us go back to my husband's Kingdom.

Vasishta: (Continuing): Leela and Saraswati resumed their sojourn. They passed by the highways of clouds, wind, the Sun and the Moon, Pole star and several other paths. They crossed the Heavens, and the lands of the Trinity too. Leela stopped to look back. There was no illumination at all. Everything was dark. So she raised a question.

41. Intergalactic Space within Consciousness-space

Leela: How come it is all so dark ? What happened to the Sun, stars, the Moon and other heavenly bodies ?

Saraswati: Leela ! You travelled a distance far beyond them. So there is no light.

Leela: Ah,we have travelled that far ! I see the reason why the Sun does not appear even as a dot. There appears to be a path to the left. What is it ? Where does it lead us ?

Saraswati: It is not a path. It is the roof of the universe. The Sun, Moon and all that you saw a short while ago were no more than particles of dust in the world of Brahma.

Vasishta: Talking as above both reached close to the roof of the universe. Leela saw the overlapping layers of the five fundamental elements at that place. Further up was the Pure Consciousness-space (*cidākāśa*) of unlimited dimensions.

आकल्पमुत्तमबलेन शिला पतेच्चेत्तस्मिन्बलात्पतगराडपि चोत्पतेच्चेत् ।
तद्योजनं न लभते विमलेऽम्बरेऽन्तर्माकल्पमेकजवगोऽप्यथ मारुतोऽपि ।।

ākalpamuttamabalena śilā pateccettasminbalātpatagarāḍapi cotpateccet |
tadyojanaṃ na labhate vimale'mbare'ntarmākalpamekajavago'pyatha māruto'pi ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 29, Sloka 60

[Note: Sage Valmiki used a beautiful metaphor to indicate the unlimited dimensions of *cidākāśa*. A large rock was falling down at a great speed. Lord Garuda (a bird) was flying up with equal speed. Their movement lasted for one *kalpa*. Lord Vayudeva (wind) moved in-between those two in either direction for the entire period of the *kalpa*. Even then, he could not touch either the rock or the Lord Garuda. Such was the immensity of *cidākāśa*'s dimension.]

Vasishta: *cidākāśa* is truly immeasurable. *cidākāśa* is the only Real Thing. The worlds of Brahma and others, which we described earlier, are spoken about from the viewpoint of ignorant people. They do not exist. You may raise a question as to how then these appear to the ignorant people.

उत्पद्योत्पद्यते तत्र स्वयं संवित्स्वभावतः ।
स्वसंकल्पैः शमं याति बालसंकल्पजालवत् ।।

utpadyotpadyate tatra svayaṃ saṃvitsvabhāvataḥ |
svasaṃkalpaiḥ śamaṃ yāti bālasaṃkalpajālavat ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 30, Sloka 8

If there is an intention, anything can get projected onto the substratum of *cidākāśa* to appear as per the expectation. When the intention vanishes, the projection too disappears. This is the Truth.

Rama: Sir! You repeatedly say that the world has formed as an illusory super imposition over *cidākāśa* or the Supreme Self. At the same time you tell us that there are no spatial or temporal directions in Supreme Self. How can you then hold that the world is a super imposition on the substratum when there are no directions like up or down? How can you say the world is superimposed 'on' the Supreme Self?

Further, if there are no directions present in the Supreme Self, how can the world which has come out of *cidākāśa* possess directions ? Will it not be better to say that directions do exist within the Supreme Self ?

Vasishta: Rama! Suppose a person has a defective vision. He sees some balls of hair flying in space. Can any balls of hair be present in space ? They don't really exist in the air. It is because of the defect in the vision, the balls seem to be present. When we express it in words, we say "Due to his defective vision he sees hair balls flying up above in space." But does it mean that the space is below and the hair balls are flying up above ? When a thing is not really there, terms like up or down, in or on do not mean anything.

Similarly, if the projected world were to be real, then only the question of Supreme Self being below and the world being present 'on' would arise. When the world itself is not really there, how can such arguments about 'above' or 'below' come up ?

Your next question was about the directions being present in the world when there

was no directionality in **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa.* After all, what we are talking about here is an illusion. What is an illusion? When you see things that are not present in the source, we call it an illusion. As the world is purely imaginary, the spatial and temporal directions that are non- existent in **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa* appear to be present within the illusory world.

You must also note that the directions you see in the world are not absolute. They have only a relative value. We talk about something being above or below relative to our position. We talk of the directions relative to the earth where we live. Otherwise, there is nothing like above or below in open space. Anything can happen as per the intentions of the **चिदाकाश** *cidākāśa*.

42. Gravitational Attraction

[**Note:** A verse written by Maharshi Valmiki at this juncture tells us about the nature of the force responsible for gravitational attraction by the Earth. Valmiki Maharshi says:

अस्वातन्त्र्यात्प्रधावन्ति पदार्थाः सर्व एव यत् ।
ब्रह्माण्डे पार्थिवो भागस्तदधस्तूर्ध्वमन्यथा ।।

asvātantryātpradhāvanti padārthāḥ sarva eva yat |
brahmāṇḍe pārthivo bhāgastadadhastūrdhvamanyathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 30, Sloka 11

Taking a superficial look, the above verse may not mean much. The commentator, Shri Ananda Bodhendra Saraswati Swami could, however, explain clearly the pregnant meaning that is implied in the verse.

When there is no sense of orientation like up and down or above and below, a fruit falling from a tree would not have known that it has to always fall downwards only. So one can argue that there is really a downward direction distinct from other directions and the fruit on the tree knows and recognizes the downward direction. But it is plain wrong. A fruit does not and cannot have the sense of up and down directions.

Every object in nature has the quality of 'gravitational pull (*gurutva*).' The word *gurutva* is generally translated as weight. But that is not correct. 'G*urutva*' stands for that power of an object because of which each object pulls towards itself all its parts. Every sensory organ has the capacity to pull towards itself the signals that are related to it – like the sounds by the ear, light by the eye and so on. The fundamental five elements also have such a quality. Whereas modern science may speak in terms of attractive and repulsive forces even at subatomic scales, Sage Valmiki conveys essentially the same concept using terms like *bhūta*-s and their *amśa*-s. The word *amśa* means atom or subatomic particle and *bhūta* means element. But for the difference in the terminology, we can see the similarity to the modern day theory of gravitational attraction.

Coming back to the issue of a fruit falling down from a tree, we can easily observe that the fruit of a tree is actually a part of the element Earth only. The quality of *gurutva* of the Earth attracts the fruit towards itself. Therefore, the fruit falls towards the Earth and not because the fruit has a sense of up-down direction.

There are no directions in this world either. In fact, it is not possible to assign directions in the world. Suppose there is a ball of sweetmeat around which hundreds of ants are crawling in all directions. To an ant, wherever it is, its legs are always downwards and its back is always up. We can say that much only.

How can anyone specifically say that an ant's position is up or down? Thus, Rama !

There is no directional factor in the world. Hence, there is no necessity for a directional factor to exist in the Supreme Self.

Moreover, Rama! The entire universe is not similar. Some are with individuals. In some, only the Plant Kingdom is present. Some contain a mere void. In some, there are no things with any shape. To some, Brahma is the creator. To some, Vishnu is the creator. Innumerable universes were created by several celestial agents. It is not possible even for Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra to enumerate them all.

प्रत्येकस्याण्डगोलस्य स्थितः कटकरत्नवत् ।
भूताकृष्टिकरो भावः पार्थिवः स्वस्वभावतः ।।

pratyekasyāṇḍagolasya sthitaḥ kaṭakaratnavat |
bhūtākṛṣṭikaro bhāvaḥ pārthivaḥ svasvabhāvataḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 30, Sloka 32

[Note: In the above verse, Sage Vasishta talks about an important scientific aspect of the forces of attraction. **'भूताकृष्टिकरो भावः'** '*bhūtākṛṣṭikaro bhāvaḥ* ' – refers to the gravitational force of the five fundamental elements as explained below.]

Every universe is constituted of the five fundamental elements. They are present in the earth also.They are inimical to each other. Fire should evaporate the water. Water should dissolve the earth. Air should blow away all these. But they are not destroying each other. Why so?

Rama! Say, a golden bangle is studded with diamonds. How are the diamonds held in place preventing their fall ? It is due to the force inherent in the gold itself. Similarly, there is an attractive force that is instrumental in keeping the five elements together without destroying each other.

[**Note:** The Sage after a digression discussing the dimensions of the universe and the gravitational forces of the five elements, once again mentioned that there is no possibility for the existence of the directions (up/down, above below) either in the universes or in the Supreme Self that is the substratum.This discussion came up when Leela reached the roof of the universe and saw an outlet on the northern side.]

Vasishta: Rama ! Getting back to our story, Leela and Saraswati entered pure Consciousness-space beyond the five elements at the end of the universe, and proceeded further. They saw many more universes and entered into one of them. It was the universe of King Padma. They travelled to the earth in that universe and eventually found the palace of King Padma. They noticed the dead body of the King bedecked in flowers. They also saw Leela seated in *samādhi* state beside the corpse. The royal servants were struggling to stay awake.

Leela had a strange desire to enter the mental world of her dead husband. Soon, both Leela and Saraswati entered another world through the world of King Padma.They found many mountains, rivers, oceans, sky, etc. in that world also. Leela saw the new Kingdom of her husband. She witnessed it earlier when she was in her *samādhi* state.

43. The War

The Kingdom was surrounded by the army of King Sindhu. Both the Kingdoms are readying themselves for a war. Celestial damsels in the Heavens were awaiting to welcome the fallen heroes of the war.

The Chiefs of staff from both sides were deeply involved in the strategic arrangement of their army formations. Up above, the gods were rushing in their aeroplanes to witness the war. Leela and Saraswati too created a plane for themselves and joined the other heavenly beings that came to watch the war.

Leela's husband was known as Viduratha in that life. The enemy King was Sindhu. Suddenly the war erupted between the two forces. The battle ground reverberated with the battle cries of the warriors. The people watching it were immersed in excited conversations. The fighting all through the day was fierce. At sunset, there was a break in the war. Viduratha convened a meeting of the captains of his army, discussed the plans for the next day and retired to sleep. Leela and Saraswati entered his bedroom through an opening in the room.

44. The Body and TheWorld are Equally Mentations

Rama: (Intervening with a question) Maharshi ! Leela and Saraswati were moving in a plane with their physical bodies. How could they go through an opening in the King's bedroom?

Vasishta: Rama ! Those, who are under the illusion that they have a physical body, cannot pass through narrow spaces. Those, who do not take their gross body to be themselves, will develop identification with their subtle bodies. Such people can go through narrow holes or move around in subtler worlds. Consciousness is the substrate for all bodies. Depending on the strength of reminiscences, it can become both the physical body and also the subtler body.

If the body is physical, the mind in it will also be physical. If the body is subtler, its mind also will be subtler. The mind (*citta*) is under the control of Consciousness (*caitanya*) and the actions done by the individual (*jīva*) are under the control of mind. If the mind is subtler, its actions will also be subtler. The accomplished individuals (*yogi*-s possessing *siddhi*-s) with subtler bodies act in subtler ways.

For example, the person in your dreams or in your imagination can go anywhere, can pass through anything because they are in their subtle form. No one can stop them. Similarly, those who move in their subtler bodies or *ātivāhika śarīra* cannot be hindered by anybody. Therefore, no wonder that both Leela and Saraswati could pass through a tiny hole.

Rama ! I would like to bring to your notice another important point. With increasing abidance in Self-Knowledge, the gross body may also take a subtler form. Progressively, the mind (*citta*) attains the form of the fundamental five elements. At the beginning of creation, the five elements were created by the Supreme Self, in accordance with his thought waves. A thought wave (*cittavṛitti*) arises only when ignorance gets associated with consciousness. In other words, ignorance engenders the thought waves, and from the thought waves arise the five elements, and from the five elements arise the subtle bodies and from the subtle bodies come the physical bodies. It is akin to a lump of clay being made from clayey soil, then casting it into the form of tiles, pots, pans etc. Thus bodies emerge from ignorance. Ignorance itself has Consciousness as the base. Hence, Consciousness associated with ignorance forms mind, subtle body and gross body. Consciousness is itself the Consciousness-space. The mind is itself the mental space. The elements and the gross forms together are the physical space. In fact all these three spaces are one. Hence we may say that the mind itself is the entire world. Viewed this way, it is not surprising that Leela and Saraswati could pass through a small hole.

Rama: Teacher! Does everyone's mind possess this capability or only a few possess it? If all the minds possess such an ability, it will mean that each will see their own separate worlds. If some people do not have this ability, it has to be admitted that the world seen by them is not engendered by their mind. In our actual experience too, we find the world to be different from our mind. None has the experience of a world generating out of one's own mind. So we have to say that, in general, the world is not a creation of the mind. If at all, only a select few fortunate people may have the power of engendering a world out of their mind in the way you mention.

Vasishta: Not so fast, Rama ! If the world is not a creation of one's mind, the imagined world will still persist even after attaining the Self-Knowledge and the dissolution of the mind. It would mean that liberation is non-existent. That would invalidate the entire teaching of Vedas. Obviously then, your line of thinking is incorrect.

You say that if everyone has this capacity, each one will witness his/her own separate world. Observe carefully and you will find it to be so. No one sees the world in the same way as the other. For some people, the world seems to originate and end from moment to moment. Yet for some others, the world lasts for eons of time.

The creation begins with one's own birth and dissolution sets in with one's own death. Just as the collective mind of Hiranyagarbha creates the world, each individual's mind creates his dream world.

So Rama !All the existing worlds are mere mentations. There is no doubt about it. When the mind calms down, the illusory world disappears. And that is liberation.

45. Matter–Experience–Memory

(**Note:** A short verse composed by Sage Valmiki at this point, received extensive annotation from Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati, the Commentator. We shall present his annotation also as a discourse between SageVasishta and Rama).

Rama: Revered Sage ! We find from our experience in the world that one speaks out what he/she thinks in his/her mind. In the same way one acts as per his mental thoughts. What resides in the mind is 'Memory (*smRiti*)'. What is done by the limbs is 'Action (*kriya*)'. So 'memory' and 'action' can be put in the same category. Scriptures also affirm this observation. For example the shruti says,

तस्माद्यत्पुरुषो मनसाभिगच्छलि तद्वाचा वदति तत्कर्मणा करोति

tasmādyatpuruṣo manasābhigacchali tadvācā vadati tatkarmaṇā karoti

Aruna Prasna 1-23-1

Memory comes from experience. Experience comes from matter. If the matter is real, the experience derived from it and in turn the memory formed from that experience will be real. In case matter is not real, automatically the memory and experience generated from it would also be unreal.

Expressing the same in the reverse order, when the memory is real, experience is real and so would be the related matter. When the memory is unreal, both the concerned experience and the matter will be unreal.

Ordinary people like us are ignorant.Their memories are ignorant. Their memories are unreal. So their experiences as well as the related matter and the world taking shape from them would also be unreal. In other words, the dream worlds created by the memory could be unreal.

But Hiranyagarbha is omniscient and his thoughts are true. Vedas also declare it to be so. Hence his memory should be real. Consequently, his experience and the world created by his mind should be real. How can you declare that the world created by him is real-unreal (*mithya*)? If the world is real, how is it possible to achieve liberation by obtaining Self-Knowledge?

Further, every individual soon after his death reminisces the worldly experiences. Because of that, he keeps moving between the higher and lower worlds. Similarly, Hiranyagarbha also should be experiencing memories of the world after the grand Dissolution of the current epoch. Hence, Hiranyagarbha must have the record of his experiences from the previous *kalpa* in his memory. And all of them are real. He is able to create the present world with the help of that memory. Thus the real things from the previous creation are causal for the things in the present creation. Therefore, we cannot say that things in the present creation lack a cause or declare them to be unreal (not true). Please elucidate if my thinking is correct.

Vasishta: Rama ! Let us start from Hiranyagarbha. Your argument is based on the assumption that Hiranyagarbha carries a memory of the experiences from the previous creation. But it is not correct. Hiranyagarbha of the previous *kalpa*, has attained liberation at the end of that *kalpa* itself. So there is no question of his being present in the current *kalpa* or carrying the past remembrances. A new meritorious individual has come to this position in the current *kalp*a. He cannot have the memories related to the previous *kalpa*. A question then arises as to how he could create now with his mind.

The current Hiranyagarbha too has a memory. But it is a mental awareness obtained from the practices observed by him, and not due to the past experiences. The kind of practice followed by him was a meditation based on the principle that the individual himself is the collective. It was all mental only, and was not based on any actual action done.

With the help of a memory so obtained, he started his first day of creation. It was not based on actual experience. Hence, his creation is also not real. His later creations were based on the memories from such an unreal experience. Thus those subsequent creations are also untrue. Therefore, none of his creations are real.

Your thinking is correct with respect to the finite individual. There is no difference between the creation by a separate individual and the creation by the collective mind. Whichever the world is, it is only a projection from the mind.

Look at your own experience. If your mind is calm, the world appears to be calm. If your mind is in turbulence, the world too seems to be turbulent. Can't you infer from this that your mind is your world?

Once you examine with a critical outlook, you will find that the mind itself is the Consciousness-space (*cidākāśa*) and the *cidākāśa*is the witness (*sākśi*). The vortex is as much water as the river is. There is nothing else in the vortex but water. The seer is the seen and the mind is the witness.

It is a sheer magic that such a huge world is seen, though the seer is one only. When a magician waves his wand, a large celestial city makes its appearance. The world is nothing but a similar illusion.

The world comprises 'I & You' only. There is nothing else. Whatever 'I' am not, it is 'you.' But, what is 'I'? The Real substance that makes up the substrate is 'me.' The superimposed world is 'you.' Who is it that uses the words 'I & You'? The user is the actual entity that is behind the 'I.' The true meaning of 'I' is Beingness(*sat*), and not a separate individual. So the world, which is different from Real entities, is undoubtedly a mentation (*manomaya*) only.

Rama! We digressed here. We discussed how Leela and Saraswati could enter the bedroom through a small hole and concluded that it was possible as they were in their subtler bodies. We need to understand that they could appear or disappear at will because they were in their pure Consciousness bodies (*cinmaya śarīra*). Let us now get back to the main story.

46. At The Moment of Death - Births - The Next Life

Leela and Saraswati entered the bedroom of King Viduratha, and occupied two separate chairs available in the room. Their divine luminescence at once filled the room. Disturbed by that brilliant light,Viduratha woke up. He was surprised to see the two celestial ladies. Recovering soon from his surprise, he got up from the bed, prostrated before the ladies, seated himself in the lotus posture on the floor and worshipped them with flowers.

Saraswati felt that the genealogy of the King should be made known to Leela as that would help her in a better understanding of the essence of Truth. So she wished that the minister, who was also asleep, should wake up. No sooner had she wished so, the minister got up as if somebody woke him up. He was surprised to see the two celestial ladies. He paid his respects to them and sat down beside the King.

Goddess Saraswati addressed the King Viduratha thus: "O King! When were you born? What are the details of your dynasty? Please enlighten us about yourself." The minister responded immediately, speaking in eulogic terms about the King's family history for the previous ten generations. He concluded by saying : "The King ascended the throne when he was ten years of age. His reign has been admirable to date. Now that he has your divine audience, he is truly blessed."

Saraswati said to the King touching his head: "O King Viduratha ! You may also please recall your previous births."

Viduratha immediately visualised his life story as King Padma. Taken over by surprise at the development of these events, he began thinking aloud as follows :

"Wow, what a magical illusion this world is ! By the grace of these two angels, I am able to understand the *māyā*. It was just about 24 hours ago that I died there. But here I am 70 years old. How is it possible? But I remember everything – my parents, grandparents, great grandparents, my childhood – all these are correct. How can these calculations go wrong? "

Hearing his words, Saraswati delivered a sermon as follows :

Saraswati: Dear King! Observe carefully and examine critically. You have not gone anywhere. You are as Pure Consciousness which is the substratum of all. Being That only, you are thinking of your story.

Your real natural form is Pure Consciousness. The village Giri, the house of Vasishta Brahmana, the Kingdom as well as the palace of King Padma are within It. Infact,the entire universe that you are witnessing is present in that Pure Consciousness only.

As soon as you were dead as King Padma, the Consciousness that was the substrate was enveloped by illusion (*māyā*). Immediately after that, you are seeing this world. You see your life story as a dream within this world.

You have been worshipping me for a long time in the dream-like life of yours. You are witnessing and recollecting the drama of your actions in the huge world that exists within the premises of the palace of King Padma. Your thoughts are running on these lines :

"I was born in so and so dynasty, I ruled the country in a certain way, I won such and such wars, I performed so many sacrificial rituals, I am 70 now, King Sindhu declared war against me, I was resting after a day's war when two angels appeared to me in my dream while I was sleeping, one of the angels bestowed to me the ability to see my past, and from now on I shall remain in my natural state."

But know everything including those thoughts of yours are a mere figment of your fancy. A moment after your death as King Padma, all this knowledge had arisen in your mind.

यस्मिन्नेव मुहूर्ते त्वं मृतिमभ्यागतः पुरा
तदैव प्रतिभैषा ते स्वयमेवोदिता हृदि

yasminneva muhūrte tvaṃ mṛtimabhyāgataḥ purā
tadaiva pratibhaiṣā te svayamevoditā hṛdi

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 46

There are two vortices in a river – one in the upstream and the other in the downstream. The water from the upstream whirlpool flows into the whirlpool downstream. Likewise, the stream of thoughts in your mind leaves one image and joins another. The vortex neither has reality nor is it distinct from the river. Only the water is real. So also, the object seen is unreal. The Consciousness within the thought wave is the reality.

We know two states in the creation – the awake and the dream states. The experience in the wakeful state is about the same for all the individuals. However, the dream world is created by each individual in his own way .On a deeper investigation, it can be seen that both the states are equally illusory.

One minute in the wakeful state could be many years in the dream. Sometimes, many births of oneself can be experienced in a single dream. One may even witness one's own beheading in his/her dream. Every one of them is untrue.

The wakeful state too comprises imaginations. For example :

a. One may see castles in the air or witness several cities. Such an illusion arises due to excessive thinking.

b. While going by a boat, the trees on the bank appear to be moving in the reverse direction. This is due to the attribution of one's own motion onto the trees.

c. Sometimes, one sees as if the mountains are dancing. The illusion is due to pathological disturbances in the physical body.

The apparent world is as much of an illusion as any of them. While these are minor, the worldly illusion is much too immense. That is all the difference.

The final Truth is:

वस्तुतस्तु न जातोऽसि न मृतोऽसि कदाचन ।
शुद्धविज्ञानरूपस्त्वं शान्त आत्मनि तिष्ठसि ।।

vastutastu na jāto'si na mṛto'si kadācana |
śuddhavijñānarūpastvaṃ śānta ātmani tiṣṭhasi ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 41, Sloka 54

You were not born. You will not die. You are Pure Consciousness and Peace. You are permeated by yourself. You perceive the world. But you are not the perceiver, for what appears as the world is you only.

The name of this body is Viduratha. The body, these hills, villages, people, even we do not exist. The world of King Padma appears in the house of Vasishta Brahmana. Neither there nor in here exists anything. Everywhere it is emptiness.

47. Mithya is neither real nor unreal

Viduratha: Goddess! You say that I am Pure Consciousness. What about my people here ? They are also living beings like me. Are they also Pure Conscious forms like me or do they have a different substratum?

You tell us that the world and the people in it are like in a dream. You declare them all as illusory (*mithya*). Does it not mean that everything in this world including the self within them is unreal and that there is nothing which is real?

Saraswati: My dear King ! There are two positions – the ignorant and the True. If you are ignorant, you should inquire whether what is seen as individual selves are true. If you are at Truth, you should ask whether the apparent forms are real as pure Consciousness. As the living beings in this world, neither you nor your people are real. So as long as the illusion of the world persists, all of you are unreal. As pure Consciousness, both you and your people are real. In other words, all are real once the illusion of the world disappears.

[**Note:** Listening to the conversation of Saraswati and Viduratha as narrated by Sage Vasishta, Rama had a doubt. Noticing it, the Sage elucidated the nature of the world further.]

Vasishta: Rama ! The world is *mithya* to a man of Self-Knowledge. An ignorant person takes it to be real. A ghost seen by a retarded child haunts him till his death. The world also affects ignorant people in a similar manner. On a deeper inquiry, one finds the world to be like a prolonged dream.

दीर्घस्वप्नम् इदम् विश्वं *dīrghaswapnamidamviswaṃ*

But then, we do not take the position that the world is totally false nor that the world does not exist at all. It is also not our stand that the dream world is unreal and non-existent. There is an element of truth in both the states. For example, a person in his dream acts, interacts and transacts with others. Consequently, he experiences happiness or sorrow. When these experiences are felt very deeply, he cries, or laughs outwardly also. Why should he behave like that, unless some element of reality is present in those dream experiences ?

Actually both the dream and the awake worlds are a result of superimposition on Consciousness. The process of 'superimposition' is an intermixing of reality with unreality. So it is natural that some elements of reality and also unreality to be present in the resultant 'superimposition.'

Hence, I said that both the dream and wakeful states are neither totally real nor completely unreal. We have a new name for them as *'mithya.'*

Rama: Teacher ! Unless we admit a certain amount of reality to the objects in the wakeful state, it is not possible to continue the transactions in the world. Otherwise, we will be endangering the teachings on actions (*karma śāstra)* which exhort us to perform virtuous deeds. However, as far as the objects of the dream world are concerned, perhaps, we can more legitimately say that they are illusory, unreal or non-existent. Is there a problem in saying so ?

Vasishta: Let's take the example of 'the son of a barren woman.' Does he really exist either in time or in space ? Can we interact with him ? It is absolutely not possible. So we can declare that such subjects to be completely unreal, non-existent, not truthful.

But the objects of the dream world are experienced at least during the time period of the dream. We also interact with them during the dream. Hence, they do have some reality present in them on a temporal scale. This type of reality is known as Ephemeral Reality or Dream World Reality (*prāthibhāsika satyatva*).

As we said, the wakeful world is after all the dream of Hiranyagarbha. Unless, some sort of reality is attributable to the dream world, our wakeful world too would lose any existence and would become totally unreal like the son of a barren woman. Every one experiences the transient reality of the awake world during transactions and interactions. We call this as transactional or empirical reality. Thus, we do have to admit the ephemeral reality to the dream world and transactional reality to the wakeful world. Or consider it from another aspect. You are there in your dream. So, you are real in your dream world. So am I in my dream world. Every one has a similar experience of himself being really present in his/her dreams.Therefore, one cannot declare the dream world to be totally non-existent.

संसारे विपुले स्वप्ने यथा सत्यमहं तव ।
यथा त्वमपि मे सत्यं सर्वं स्वप्नेष्विति क्रमः ।।

saṃsāre vipule svapne yathā satyamahaṃ tava |
yathā tvamapi me satyaṃ sarvaṃ svapneṣviti kramaḥ ||
Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 42, Sloka 20

I am real to you and you are real to me in the wakeful world. Likewise, all that is seen (including you) is real to the seer (the 'me') in the dream.

Rama: If the dream and wakeful states are equivalent as you seem to say, the dream objects should continue to appear after one wakes up from the dream. After all, the objects of the awake state stay the same, during the time of dream !

Vasishta: I shall once again explain the nature of reality of the objects in the dream world and the wakeful world. Please listen to me carefully.

Speaking in terms of the reality of the substrate, the actual substance that constitutes either the dream world objects or the objects of the wakeful state, they are real. But neither of them is real in the form they appear, because the objects of the wakeful world do not appear in the same form in the dream and similarly the dream world objects do not appear in the same form in the wakeful state. The dream objects do not exist in awake world space. Awake world objects do not exist in dream world space. In other words, objects in the dream are not present in the space of the wakeful world. Objects of the wakeful world are not present in the space of dreams. Objects of both the dream and wakeful states do not remain the same within all the space time frames.

We have already defined the real thing to be that which is invariant in all times and at all places. Therefore, none of the objects of the wakeful state can be really real. Nevertheless, there is in them a certain quality of reality owing to the nature of the substratum. Hence we designated them as *mithya*. Rama! You may recall that Goddess Saraswati highlighted this point when Viduratha had asked her about the state of reality of his people.

Goddess Saraswati continued her teaching to Viduratha as follows:

Saraswati: Dear King! The Consciousness which is the substratum for both the dream and wakeful worlds is not only real but also effulgent. Just like the owner enjoys the wealth in his treasury, Consciousness-space experiences the world that manifests within itself.

I revealed to you this knowledge in order to satisfy your wife, Leela. She already witnessed in your own house various pieces of evidence presented by me to establish that the world is *mithya*. She directly experienced the multiverse here. You should also imbibe this knowledge. I shall leave now. May your desires come true ! My Blessings to you!

Viduratha: Goddess! Anyone who approaches even me gets his/her desires fulfilled. Your divine audition will surely fulfil all desires. I am enlightened by your teaching. I shall leave this body and proceed to my real abode, like moving from one dream to another. I seek your approval. Please let my minister and my unmarried daughter accompany me to my real place.

Saraswati: Dear King, we don't say 'no' to the wishes of our devotees. May things happen to you as you desire ! Govern the country in a manner that befits the devotion shown by Leela. I shall tell you what's in store for you in the future as there are a few boons already granted to you earlier.

You will die in the current war and then get back into the physical body of your previous birth. Your minister and your daughter also will get their previous bodies. The three of you have to travel to that place in an air-like subtle form. Myself and Leela will travel in our mental bodies. We shall now proceed on our own paths.

48. Virtual Images or Real Beings ?

While they were about to leave, a messenger came running and said to the King: "Sir ! The enemy seized our city tonight itself. Our army is preparing to counter the attack. I saw these things from the observation tower in our palace." As he was about to finish his report, war cries and fierce sounds of the combat filled the air.

The queen with distraught looks hurriedly came to the King, followed by her retinue. The maid of the queen told the King that the enemy had already entered the royal palace. She also said that they captured the queen who somehow managed to escape from the enemy. She begged the King to protect them.

Viduratha bowed to the two celestial beings, Leela and Saraswati, and said to them, "Goddesses ! I leave my wife under your charge. I am going to war. Please save her." Losing not a moment further, he rushed to the war zone and jumped into the fray like a lion.

Much surprised by what was witnessed by her, Leela asked Saraswati:

Leela: Devi! The queen resembles me. Not only she, the minister, the royal servants, the maids – all are exactly like my family and my royal entourage. Mother ! Please tell me if these people are real beings or merely images seen in a mirror ?

Saraswati:

यथा ज्ञप्तिरुदेत्यन्तस्तथानुभवति क्षणात् ।
चितिश्चेत्यार्थतामेति चित्तं चित्तार्थतामिव ।।

yathā jñaptirudetyantastathānubhavati kṣaṇāt |
citiścetyārthatāmeti cittaṃ cittārthatāmiva ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 44, Sloka 18

Leela ! Mind acquires the knowledge of a thing in a jiffy and experiences it.

The mind assumes the form of an object within a fraction of a moment. Consciousness too takes the form of the 'percept' in no time. Neither spatial nor temporal dimensions are required for these phenomena to take place.

You see two worlds – one in the mind and the other in Consciousness. The world which manifests in Consciousness (*cit*) is the wakeful state and that which appears in the mind (*citta*) is called dream. Both the worlds are existing internally, but seem to exist outside. Consciousness (*caitanya/cit*) is present as a reflection in both the worlds. Hence, they appear to be real. They appear to be not only real but also splendorous.

Because of the residual impressions carried by your husband at the time of his death in your house there, he was born here in the same form. In fact, the words 'here and there' have no significance. He was born where he died. With whatever impressions he died, he was born again with the same impressions. The ministers and other dependents were all the beings born because of his tendencies. They resemble the people in his previous life, but they are not the same. They are born out of the Beingness of the King, they are sustained by his Beingness and appear because of It. One need not wonder how a single person's Beingness can support so many others. After all, you are aware that you support so many dream creatures in your dreams out of your Beingness.

Leela: Mother ! The people I see in my dream appear to me only. So I can understand that my dream characters are not real. Unlike them, the people in my wakeful state are seen by others also . Hence, I think that they are real. My question to you was about the individuals in my wakeful state, not the ones in my dream.

Saraswati: Leela ! If the things seen by everyone in the wakeful state were to be real, the objects created by a magician would also be real.

Leela: Let me give you another reason. The things seen in the dream are not seen once we wake up. Even the raw material from which they could have possibly been derived does not survive the dream. Hence, they can't be real. The things in the wakeful state do not just disappear like that. So I feel these are real.

Saraswati: Leela ! How can you say that ? The things in the wakeful state also disappear after attaining the Self-Knowledge. So they are also not real. In addition, the objects of the awake state get destroyed if their constituent parts get destroyed. By 'destroyed,' I mean to say that the object gets reduced to its causal factor (from which it has originated). But when Self- Knowledge is obtained, everything is sublated. Sublation means disappearance of even the causal factors. For example, when a pot is destroyed (broken), it becomes clay. If we say that the pot is sublated, it means that not only the pot shape but also the causal clay cannot be seen anymore. This is the difference between destruction (*nāśa*) and sublation (*bādha*).

Leela ! The sum and substance of the teaching is that the wakeful state is also as unreal as the dream. Just as in the state of dream, the dream characters obtain the reality from your reality, it can happen in the awake state also. Therefore, the ministers and others derive their reality from the reality of the King.

In order to make it more clear to you, let me elaborate further. Suppose there is a little aperture in the ceiling. When the Sun is overhead, a beam of light shines through it. We often see many dust particles sparkling in that light beam. The dust particles were already existing in the room and made their appearance under the light of the Sunrays. Similarly, in the space called the Supreme Self, the particles called the universes are already floating. Individual creatures take birth within these universes. What does it mean to take birth?

When a worshiper intensely worships with the thought that 'I am fire,' his body becomes hot. His thoughts create a strong impression and because of that impression (*samskāra*), he experiences the heat. In a similar manner, Pure Consciousness witnesses a world under the influence of residual tendencies. It also knows a world thus. It divides itself as separate individuals in the world and utters "I," "I," "I." This is called birth.

Hence, the visible world is neither totally true nor totally false. It is undefinable it is *mithya*.

The driving force for the above happening is the "desire for experiencing" by the individuals. The desires may arise in many forms. Some look like the previous experiences. Some are new. Some exist as dormant unexpressed potentials. Because of the variety of such desires, you see your old ministers and others.

From an absolute point of view (from the stance of Consciousness), the Beingness of the people of Viduratha's world and Padma's world is one and the same. Hence, they are all One. But from an empirical point of view, there is a difference. At the most, you may say they look as if they are the same.

Leela ! An important aspect of creation can be seen here. Within the reflected Consciousness of King Viduratha, a flash of an intuition clicked. It was an illusion, like a dream. He saw a world in that illusion. It happened so because his own impressions together with the cumulative impressions of all the creatures at the same time had given rise to a thought-wave in the mind of Hiranyagarbha, whose thoughts always materialize as true (*satyasankalpa*). Thus the thought-waves of Hiranyagarbha and the individual in the form of a King here combined to engender a Leela who looked just like you.

एषा त्वमम्बरमहं भुवनं धरा च
राजेति सर्वमहमेव विभातमात्रम् ।
चिद्व्योमबिल्वजठरं विदुरङ्ग विद्धि
त्वं तेन शान्तमलमास्स्व यथास्थितेह ।।

eṣā tvamambaramahaṃ bhuvanaṃ dharā ca
rājeti sarvamahameva vibhātamātram |
cidvyomabilvajaṭharaṃ viduraṅga viddhi
tvaṃ tena śāntamalamāssva yathāsthiteha ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 44, Sloka 52

The second Leela, you, me, the King, the earth, all this space and the world seen within it are all "I," Consciousness only. The entire thing is a thought-wave within Consciousness. If the Consciousness-space is a fig fruit, all these worlds are the tiny seeds within that fruit. The wise know this and may you also know it and stay happy as Consciousness

49. Leela-P and Leela-V

(**Note:** Let us, for the ease of communication, designate the first Leela as Leela-P (P for King Padma) and the second Leela as Leela-V (V for Viduratha).

Saraswati: (Continuing the conversation with Leela-V): Leela ! Your husband will die in the war and leave that body of Viduratha. He will enter the body of King Padma.

Leela-V: (Agitated by the words of the Goddess, she prostrated before Saraswati and said) : Mother! I have been worshipping Goddess Saraswati regularly. She often appears to me in my dreams. You are just like her. Or, perhaps, you are her. Kindly grant me a boon.

Saraswati: Leela ! I am pleased with your devotion and worship. I shall grant you your wish. Tell me what you need.

Leela-V: Devi ! You said that my husband would go somewhere else after his death, leaving his present body. I desire to follow him in this body and continue to be his wife. Please, bless me accordingly.

Saraswati: It shall happen so !

(**Note:** Leela-V was very happy with those words. But Leela-P felt a bit apprehensive).

Leela-P: Goddess ! You abide as Consciousness. Therefore, whatever you think of materializes for you. You granted the wish of Leela-V to go to another world in her present body. But when I wanted to go to village Giri, you said that I could go only in a subtle body. I wish to know the reason behind this differential in advice.

Saraswati: Leela-P !

न किंचित्कस्यचिदहं करोमि वरवर्णिनि ।
सर्व संपादयत्याशु स्वयं जीवः स्वमीहितम् ।।

na kiṃcitkasyacidahaṃ karomi varavarṇini |
sarva saṃpādayatyāśu svayaṃ jīvaḥ svamīhitam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 45, Sloka 12

I do not actually do anything for anybody. Everyone fulfills his/her wish by the force of one's own thought-waves.

Every individual has thought waves. The thought waves have the power of Consciousness mixed with *māyā* in them. I am the presiding deity for the thought-waves. So I reveal to the people the forthcoming good or bad events in the guise of giving them boons. The thought wave I am referring to, called *saṃvit*, is like a seed. It triggers every action in accordance with a specific pattern. I give booms in conformity with that pattern.

When you worshiped me, you did so with a desire for liberation. I responded to you accordingly. I granted you the boons that facilitated the acquisition of Self-Knowledge and freedom from bondage. But how was it done ? It was done by the power of the Grace of Consciousness in you only.

यस्य यस्य यथोदेति स्वचित्प्रयतनं चिरम् ।
फलं ददाति कालेन तस्य तस्य तथा तथा ।।

yasya yasya yathodeti svacitprayatanaṃ ciram |
phalaṃ dadāti kālena tasya tasya tathā tathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 45, Sloka 18

One obtains the result in accordance with the effort he/she makes with his mind.

An effort does not suddenly arise. It is the result of continuous and cumulative work. Finally, it yields the fruit through the manifestation of a divine being or observation of austerities. The important point to bear in mind is that your effort, the divine beings, and even the fruit they give is equally a *mithya*. Still, when a fruit is desired, one does need to put in the effort. First of all, one should perform the works as stipulated in the scriptures. One would eventually reap the fruits of those actions. Actions prohibited by the scriptures should be avoided as they would yield unwanted effects. Everyone should develop discrimination to distinguish the approved and prohibited actions.

I granted a boon to you commensurate with your efforts. The other lady obtained the fruits as per her work. That explains the difference between you two.

50. Viduratha's Journey To Other Worlds

Vasishta: Rama! While the conversation was thus going on between those two ladies, Viduratha joined the fight. Both Leela's and Viduratha's daughter prayed to Saraswati, and obtained the ability to watch the war from where they were present. As a result they could witness the war sitting in their own rooms.

It was a fierce war between the two armies. The fighting was intense and the scene was blood-curdling. Over time, it is clear that Viduratha's side was losing. Observing this, both Leela's asked Saraswati why their husband was losing, in spite of having her blessings.

Saraswati: My dears ! King Sindhu, the enemy of your husband, worshipped me with a desire for victory. Your husband prayed for liberation. So, I cannot bestow victory to Viduratha and liberation to Sindhu.

Note: The pace of the war accelerated with the break of dawn. Sage Valmiki devoted two cantos to describe in detail the war, the regular and celestial weaponry used in the battles, the strategies adopted by the armies etc.

The two sides fought with various weaponry. Viduratha and Sindhu got down to a direct sword fight. Sindhu was injured seriously and swooned. Viduratha took it easy then and was inattentive. Taking advantage of it, Sindhu severed both the hands of Viduratha, after he recovered from his unconsciousness. Leela-P, in spite of her Self-Knowledge, fainted. Leela-V, however, continued to watch with concern. The driver of Viduratha's chariot diverted the chariot away from the battle field. He brought the King to Goddess Saraswati. But by then the King was already dead.

Shouts of victory to King Sindhu reverberated outside. The residents in the palace were distraught and crying over the loss of their own ruler. Leela-V was overcome with sorrow. She appealed to Saraswati about the condition of her husband. Saraswati then decided to impart Self-Knowledge to Leela-V also. The Goddess addressed Leela-V in the following words.

Saraswati: Leela-V ! There is not even a speck of reality in the war you had just seen with divine vision. It is nothing more than a dream. The entire Kingdom you see is within the room-space here. This room together with the Kingdom is present within the hutment of Vasishta *brahmaN*a. In other words, you, me, Leela-P, Viduratha and his Kingdom, the earth and the entire world are present within that village Giri.

What is it that appears as all these multifarious forms ? It is your "self" only. Your "self" sometimes shows these non-existent forms. It shows itself in those forms. Sometimes, it stays totally unknowable. Your "self" is the reality and the world is an illusion. Similarly, the scene exists only when the seer is there to see. The apparent percept and the perceiver are not one. You are the seer. You are real.

Illusion can exist only when there is someone to visualize it. You, the Seer of the illusion, are eternal. The illusion is not. These worlds are seen and experienced in accordance with the impressions stored from past experiences. The reality actually is that nothing is born nor anything gone.

The dead body of King Padma is present in one of those imaginary worlds. Your husband's self has already reached that dead body. The self of his other wife, Leela-P, who fainted a short while ago, also has gone there.

Leela-V: Saraswati ! How did Leela-P get a physical body there ? How did I become her co-wife ? How is she being received now by the people in that house ?

Saraswati: Your husband Viduratha is the King Padma there. That King Padma saw his world, in that palace where his dead body lies. The world you see now and also the world seen by King Padma are *mithya* only, equally illusory.

Leela-P was seen as his wife in one of his imaginations. You appear as his wife in another imagination. Each imagination is a dream. You are as much an illusion as she is. Just as all this is a dream to your husband, it is also dream-like to both of you. The dreams of both of you got intermingled and a relationship came up among the three of you.

When you realize this fact, the dream-like worlds will disappear. What remains then will be the reality. Once that happens, it will be clear that what appeared as the world was the 'Self." You, me, your husband, Leela-P, your royal retinue and every one originated from the Self only.

Immediately after your husband died, this lady now in the form of Leela-P appeared in the imagination of his subtle body taking your looks. The human mind has the tendency to believe in the reality of the form that appears in front of it. If the mind sees the subtle body, it takes the subtle body to be real. If the gross physical body appears before it, the mind takes the gross body to be real.

Your husband Viduratha in his subtle body after death saw Leela-P in her subtle body. He thought that he had taken rebirth and met his dear wife. But all of it is only an illusion. Leela-P worshiped me in her past life with a desire to prevent widowhood for her. Hence, she died earlier than her husband. You wanted to go to your husband's place. I granted the boons to both of you.The rest of the story is all known to you.

While Saraswati was speaking thus, Leela-V left her physical body, joined the life-force (*prANa*) and assumed a subtle body comprising the impressions from the past actions. She wandered in the open space searching for the path taken by her husband. Goddess Saraswati bestowed another subtle body comprising her past impressions to Viduratha's daughter and despatched her into the open space.

Leela-V who was wandering in her subtle body heard someone calling "Mother." She found that it was her own daughter who was calling. Her daughter had divine looks in a shining subtle body. She was asking her mother to join her. Leela-V ran to meet her daughter.

Leela-V: My dear! It appears that you have a celestial body. You seem to have reached here before me. You have a divine body and I expect you have divine accomplishments too. You might be knowing the way your father went. Please, take me there.

[**Note:** Viduratha's daughter led the way and the mother followed her. The paths taken by the daughter are described by Sage Valmiki to resemble the fate line in the palm that encodes the destiny of the individual. His words were:

निर्मलं करमालाग्रं यथा लक्षणलेखिका ।।

nirmalaṃ karamālāgraṃ yathā lakṣaṇalekhikā ||

Utpatti Prkarana, Sarga 53, Sloka 7

The mother-daughter duo travelled a great distance together. They passed many cloud spheres, the world of the Sun and other celestial worlds. They reached the top of the universe. They pierced through it, crossed the spheres of the five fundamental elements around it. They finally entered the Consciousness-space. The distance they travelled was so long that Garuda, the Lord of the birds couldn't have covered in trillions of years traveling at the best of speeds possible.

There were an infinite number of universes in the Consciousness-space. Leela-P penetrated through one of such universes, like an insect entering a fruit. She crossed once again the worlds of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. She finally reached the earth. She found the palace of King Padma and entered. She went to the room where the dead body was lying bedecked in flowers. She looked for her daughter. The daughter was not found. She could not make out how she missed her who had been ahead of her all the time. She could not remember where and when she lost sight of her daughter. Looking at the dead body of the King, she mused how lucky she had been. Leela-P said to herself "My husband, after dying in the war, entered this body and is sleeping peacefully. By the grace of Saraswati, I could come here in my body."

Actually, she could go there only in her subtle body. But she was under the impression that she became her physical body. She moved around her physical body. She fanned her husband's body.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki interposed here a description of the way the life-force of Viduratha took up its journey after leaving the physical body. He also narrated a dialogue between Leela-P and Saraswati at this juncture. The conversation took place in the world of Viduratha.]

51. Gross World also is Made up of Impressions only

Leela-P: Goddess ! Viduratha, Leela-V and their daughter went to the world of King Padma. The 'self' of Viduratha would enter the body of King Padma at that place. When the King would wake up, how would the royal servants already present there interact with him? What would they think of Leela-V, who had gone from here ? You said that the King would treat her as his wife. How could that be possible?

Saraswati: Oh, there's nothing so mysterious about it. The King, the servants and all the others present are identified with the Consciousness-space. All of them act under the assumption that the relationship between them is natural – whether it is between the husband and wife, the King and his cohorts and so on. A natural relationship gets established when one sees the other by virtue of the property of Consciousness-space.

We three, yourself, myself and Leela-V, are aware of all the actual developments. We interact possessing this knowledge whereas the others act unknowingly.

There are three reasons why it happens so:

1. All of it is nothing but a reflection (a virtual image) of Consciousness
2. It is due to the order of things established within the intention of Hiranyagarbha.
3. The super natural powers of you and me make it happen.

52. Boons and Curses

Leela-P: Mother ! You granted Leela-V a boon to go to her husband in her physical body. Why didn't she go with her gross body ?

Saraswati: One would need Self-Knowledge, merit and blessings to be able to travel to other worlds. Despite having these three, one cannot go there in the physical body. The rule has been laid down by Hiranyagarbha and his likes whose intentions get set without fail. As long as you believe that you are possessed by a witch, you will not be able to get rid of it. Similarly, as long as you believe that you have a gross physical body, you can not fly in space. The three qualities – Self-Knowledge, merit and blessings – mentioned above, will provide you an *ātivāahika deha* (subtle body). *ātivāahika deha* is a mental body with the impressions of I-consciousness retained. As soon as one obtains the *ātivāahika deha*, the physical body gets destroyed.

The boons or blessings and the curses will only trigger the effects of the actions previously undertaken by him. They do not create new effects. Say, a person got a poem by rote and it so happens that one day he is unable to recite it correctly. Then, somebody gives a prompt or reminds him of the forgotten word. Immediately, the person remembers it correctly and completes his recitation with the cue provided by the prompted word. The boons and curses work like that cue. So, Leela-P !, Leela-V has only a feeling of being in her physical body because of my boon

Leela-P: Devi ! The physical body performs so many deeds. How does it get extinct after attaining the Self-Knowledge ?

Saraswati: There is no alternative for it but to go. Would the snake imagined over the rope ever bite ?

Leela-P: But that snake did scare the person who saw it. Hence, the snake did show its effect.

Saraswati: That effect is not caused by the snake. That person's own imagination caused the scare. As soon as a light is shone on it, the snake disappears. Why should he get scared after that ? The physical body is also like that.

Leela-P: Nobody speaks of the death of a snake imagined over the rope. But people speak of the death of the body. In case the body were to be really non-existing, how could such a usage come into parlance?

Saraswati: It is also an illusion. The reason behind such an illusion is the impression preserved from the past experiences of the individual. What we see to be going on in the world is all our own imagination arising out of the impressions stored in us. There is no other reason like boons, curses or Hiranyagarbha and so on.

Leela-P: If the world were to be the result of the impressions stored in us, it should appear internally only like dreams. How is that we see it to be external to us out there?

Saraswati: It is also an illusion to think that the world is external. Truly speaking, the world is not out there. It is internal only !

Please note that if something appears to be located outside, it does not mean that it is not internal. For example, due to a defect in the vision, suppose you see two moons up in the sky. Where did the second moon come from? It arises internally only; yet the second moon appears to be outside. That is the reason why it is said that only the meritorious and knowledgeable people would be able to go to the subtle worlds.

The gross physical bodies are unreal. The subtle *ātivāahika* bodies are real. So the question comes up as to how can they co-exist ? Leela-V obtained Self-Knowledge from my discourses. She could therefore visit the world visualised by her husband.

53. What governs Happiness and Sorrow

Leela-P: I could follow your teaching this far, thank you.

I find here that my husband is dead in the body of Viduratha. What is the reason for this tragedy to visit him ? More fundamentally, why should the living beings face the polar pairs of happiness and sorrow at all ? Is there any reason for it ? How does one get rid of them ? Is there a rule governing them ? Do they follow any specific order for such occurrences ?

If you say that there is no overarching rule or order and that each subject acts in accordance with its own intrinsic nature, then the question comes up as to who ordained it to be so. What or who polices the instituted mechanisms ? For example, how come the fire is always hot, never cold ?

Saraswati: Leela-P ! Certain thought-waves had occurred to Hiranyagarbha at the beginning of creation. Some of those intentions are of a fixed nature and some of them are of variable nature. Various objects in the world originate in consonance with those intentions. The principle that 'the invariable objects would not change and the variable ones would be under continuous change' is never violated. Hence, the wise declare that the creation follows a clear pattern, an order.

One need not entertain any doubt regarding the possibility of multiplicity of things-- in different shapes, sizes and properties – originating out of one single root cause. The creation phase ends with the dissolution phase. All the objects coalesce in their subtle form into one uniform lump during the dissolution phase.

A substance can exist with one or other 'form' only. It cannot be present without a form. For example, gold may exist as a lump, as an ornament or as a vessel, a plate. How can it be without any form ? Similarly, the dissolution stage cannot exist totally as void without having at least some subtle shape. All forms like bangles, earrings, necklaces, chains and rings etc. arise from gold; similarly, fire, water, air etc. arise from the subtle Consciousness-space which is the one that exists during dissolution.

With whatever form and qualities Consciousness manifested as a substance at the time of creation, those characteristics are conserved. The qualities will forever be the same.

In other words, if Consciousness manifests itself as a substance with emission of heat e.g. fire, it will be emitting heat only; if Consciousness arose as a cool substance at the time of creation, it remains as a cool substance only even todate. The substratum for the world has been ever since and will forever be Consciousness. It will not change. Hence, the world manifested from Consciousness will necessarily follow an internally consistent order (*niyati*).

Similar to the five fundamental elements, the cycle of birth and death also goes according to a pattern. Karma (work done) is behind that pattern. If there is action to be performed, birth takes place. When the action ends, death will occur.

Leela-P, what I have narrated so far is from the transactional point of view. I shall now explain it to you from the absolute point of view.

From the stance of the Supreme Self, which may be called as the absolute point of view, there is no world at all. What pattern or a regular order can be said to be present for a thing that doesn't exist ?! We know from our experience that we imagine various forms and we ourselves observe them as the seers. That is what our daily dream is. Likewise, we see the world as magic because of *māyā*.

However, there is little scope for questions or answers when viewed from the absolute perspective. Any inquiry has got to be from a worldly point of view only. Let me, therefore, explicate to you once again the Law of Karma – the cause and effect relationships -- from an empirical view point.

Just as there is an internal order within all substances, all living beings are also governed by certain inherent order. This order is conserved as long as the separate 'self' as an individual continues. Even if that individual dies in-between, the inherent order is not affected.

What controls the order in the living beings is the Law of Karma. Karma can be classified broadly into two categories – the Accumulated or Stored karma and the Current suffrage or Commenced karma. Out of the two, the currently commenced karma is more dominant. It prevents the stored karma from coming into effect until the individual dies. The currently commenced karma loses its grip at the time of death. It cannot impede the stored karma anymore. The Stored karma takes over and shows its effects from the time of death onwards. The course that the karmas follow may be summarized as given below:

1. The average life span is 400 years in *kṛita Yuga*.

2. The average life span is 300 years in *treta Yuga*.

3. The average life span is 200 years in *dwāpara Yuga*.

4. The average life span is100 years in *kali Yuga*.

5. The life span is not inflexibly etched on stone. It may vary depending on some factors as follows:
    i. It decreases with decreasing adherence to one's own obligatory duties and responsibilities.
    ii. It decreases with increasing performance of such actions which are explicitly prohibited by the scriptures.

The quantification of the amount of variation as an effect of a specific action done can be ascertained from the relevant scriptures.

When the life-period of an individual is completed, the vital forces (*prāṇa*-s and *indriya*-s) reach the heart via the nerve system. When all the forces are gathered at the heart, the concerned organs lose their vitality. Severe pain ensues. The vital forces leave the physical body. That in short is the process of death.

Leela-P: Goddess ! Do realized beings also go through the same painful process of death ? Will the pain be the same for all ? Would the journey after death be similar in every case ?

Saraswati: It is not so. People who are about to die, can be broadly grouped into three categories.

1. The Foolish people; 2. People with controlled minds, and 3. Accomplished Yogis.

Foolish people are those who do not have any control on their minds. They go through much suffering during their death. Those who had committed more acts of demerit among them suffer more. Various body organs of theirs disintegrate, they groan and produce the sounds of death rattle, become unconscious, will gasp for breath and die a miserable death.

People who had at least some practice of focusing their life-force (*prāṇa*) and mind, but not yet matured in controlling the mind, will suffer moderately during their death. Accomplished Yogis are those who are capable of guiding their *prāṇa* forces along specific nerves of their choice. They can also do body-swapping.They let go of their life with ease, it will not be painful at all.

54. The process of Leaving the Body

Leela-P: The organs in the bodies of the foolish people also are the same as in the others. Why is it that they have to lose consciousness first and then die?

Saraswati: I told you already that in the beginning of creation itself, the Supreme Self has laid down certain rules and regulations. Everyone has to face the suffering as ordained therein. It is inviolable. There is no escape.

The world is the outcome of a wilful action knowingly done by the Lord. It is He who experiences happiness and sorrow in the form of a separate individual. Afterall, He Himself has entered their bodies assuming the form of those individuals.Though the bodily organs are similar in all the individuals, the suffering at the time of death varies in accordance with the virtuous or evil deeds done by that individual.

Changes also take place in the nerve system at the time of death.

[**Note:** The "nerve system" referred to in Vedanta is not exactly the same as the nervous system known in present day human physiology. The Vedantic nerve system is invisible.]

1. The humors of air, fire and water (*vāta, pitta and kapha*) reach a stage of dangerous imbalance in the body.

   [**Note:** A detailed explanation of the terms *vāta, pitta and kapha* is provided in the last chapter of Yoga Vasishta - Nirvana Prakarana - Section "56. Exploring The Subtle Nervous System".]

2. The body will not be able to handle the various foods and other intakes.

3. The vital air responsible for homeostasis in the body will fail.
4. As a result of #3 above, the oxygen and other fluid flows will be adversely affected.
5. Consequently, the external sense organs become defunct though the mind may be working.
6. Respiration gets blocked (both from the nose and the mouth).
7. The subtle body separates and leaves the gross physical body. That is death.

Unless 'death' exists as a regulating principle, the phantasmagoria called the world will not be functional. Consciousness, which is the substratum for the world, does not change. The world is just a name for change. Death is nothing but a change.

55. What is Death ?

Birth and death in Consciousness are like the nodes in the stem of a bamboo. The node is also a part of the bamboo stem only. But remember, the analogies given here are purely from the empirical standpoint.

Who or what is an 'individual' (*jīva*) from the absolute position ? If he is Pure Consciousness, he cannot have the cycle of births and death.

Or, can we say that the individual is the body or life-force ? Or is he the sensory organs ? The mind ? The intellect ? The I-consciousness ? Or the ignorance ? If He were to be any one of these, he would be an inert entity. An inert entity cannot have either birth or death. Further, as an inert entity, he cannot perform any actions. Since it is not possible that the separate individual could be insentient, let us assume that he is a sentient entity. But he has death; therefore it has to be a sentient entity that has death. In which case, who is it that is able to witness his death ?

We can not say that the witness for the death of one individual is another individual because we had earlier established that 'Sentience' is One only. So if there was to be a witness for the death of Consciousness, it had to be an inert substance only. An inert substance is incapable of witnessing. Thus there cannot be anyone who could be a witness for the death of Consciousness. So we have to admit that there is nothing like death at all !

Let us examine what is meant by 'the death of Consciousness' from the worldly perspective. Does it mean mere transmigration from one body to another ? Or is it total destruction ?

Let's presume that death means complete destruction. Who is the executioner of this act of total destruction ? Either it should be a case of self-destruction or it must be induced or carried out extraneously by another agent. Nobody destroys one's own self. So the death should have been wrought by some outsider.

But we cannot conceive of the existence of an external agent because we have already established that Consciousness is Alone, without a second. Therefore, there cannot be an outsider external to the Non-dual Consciousness. So death as complete destruction is impossible to happen for Consciousness.

Moreover, we face another logical improbability if we say that Consciousness is destructible. Consciousness is the basis for the existence of the world – like clay is the basis for the existence of a pot. If clay is totally destroyed, the pot has also got to go with it. Hence once Consciousness is destroyed, the world would also automatically get destroyed. The world would not be visible anymore once the Consciousness is destroyed. But it does not happen so. Thus, once again it stands conclusively proved that the destruction of Consciousness is an impossibility.

Because we cannot admit the total destruction of Consciousness, we have to agree that 'death' means merely the transmigration of the individual from one body to another body. Put in different words, we can say that no individual really dies or is born in this world and that only the outer sheaths keep changing.

Hence, both birth and death are mentations, pure imagination only. The imagination takes place because of the individual's tendencies (*vāsana*-s). Liberation is none other than the realization of the Truth that both the tendencies and the world are mere fantasies.

Leela-P: Mother ! Please go a bit more into the details about the birth and death that appear in the world. How do the individuals that are dead get another body? What is the reality of the world that they move in ?

Saraswati: Leela-P ! At the time of death, the sensory organs merge with the mind; the mind merges with the life-force; the life-force merges with the individual's Consciousness (*jIva caitanya*) which in turn merges with the Supreme Self.

The individual's consciousness is limited because of the conditioning by the inner organ (*antaHkaraNa*). As a matter of fact, the conditioning support is the individual (*jIva*). The conditioning support is mind-stuff only. Hence, the individual imagines that he had travelled a long distance, because of the impressions carried in his mind, though he doesn't actually move anywhere. The individuals in this stage are generally known as spirits.

ततोऽसौ प्रेतशब्देन प्रोच्यते व्यवहारिभिः ।
चेतनं वासनामिश्रमामोदानिलवत्स्थितम् ।।

tato'sau pretaśabdena procyate vyavahāribhiḥ |
cetanaṃ vāsanāmiśramāmodānilavatsthitam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 55, Sloka 7

The tendencies (impressions) exist in the individual like the fragrance diffused in air. Though the fragrance and the air are two different things, we cannot actually differentiate them. Every individual creates another body for himself in his dreams, and takes actions with that dream body in his dream world. Likewise, the separate individual after death creates another world, imagines his journey to that world, and fantasizes a body for himself in order to experience the objects in that world. That should explain to you the reality of the 'other' worlds after death.

We can classify the dead people into two major groups -

i) Individuals with demerit, and ii) Meritorious individuals.

Each of the major groups can be divided into three sub groups -

i) the ordinary individual, ii) The intermediary individual, and iii) the best individuals.

Thus we can have in total six types of individuals -

i) Ordinary individuals with demerit.

ii) Intermediate individuals with demerit.

iii) Worst individuals with demerit.

iv) Ordinary meritorious individuals.

v) Intermediary meritorious individuals.

vi) Best meritorious individuals.

However, the grouping is not very rigid or inflexible. For example, the lowest in the sub group of ordinary individuals with demerit may go through repentance, face severe penalties or observe penances and change to another sub group. He/she may over the course of time even achieve liberation triggered by some events during the cycles of his births and deaths. Most usually the lowliest of the individuals with demerit take birth as stones or plants. The intermediary individuals with demerit take birth as plants and gradually progress to be animals. An ordinary individual with demerit may be born as a human being. Intermediary meritorious individuals are born in the worlds of celestial beings – like *kinnera*-s, *Kimpurusha*-setc. Ordinary meritorious individuals are born as the best of human beings. Virtuous individuals of the superior variety are born in heavenly worlds.

56. The Process of Rebirth

The individuals that go to the other worlds complete their ordained life in those worlds in accordance with the merit-demerit gained by them as a consequence of their earthly actions. After completion of their experiences there, they take up a return journey as follows :

a) Through air, they enter the rain.

b) Through the rain, they enter a plant or tree.

c) Via the plant, they enter its seed.

d) They enter male individuals in the form of the seed.

e) From the male being, they enter the female being.

f) From the mother, they get a body of the same type as that of the parents.

Now, I shall narrate to you the changes that occur in the mind of an individual after death.

i. He realizes that he is dead.

ii. He thinks that he got a new body owing to the obsequies performed by the family.

iii. He surmises that the messengers of God of Death are carrying him off.

iv. He feels he has reached the world of Lord Yama (the Lord of Death).

v. If the dead individual is of the meritorious type, he thinks that he has been taken to the godly worlds in divine aeroplanes on a very pleasant journey.

vi. If the dead individual had demerit, he imagines that the messengers of God of Death had taken him to hell and he had an arduous journey.

vii. If the individual belongs to an intermediary group, he imagines that the Lord of Death is assessing his virtuous and sinful deeds.

viii. Everything is imagined by the individual by himself as per the impressions retained from the effects of his past actions. Just as the dreams are one's own private experiences, the imaginings after death are also private.

ix. Before being born as a human, he thinks to be that in which he enters. If he entered the seed of a plant, he thinks that he is that seed. Later, he thinks himself to be progressively the sprout, the stem, the stalk, the ear of the grains, and the entire plant.

x. Once he enters the womb of his mother, he remembers all his previous births.

xi. In his life as a seed or a plant etc., he will be unable to have any experience of happiness or sorrow because he does not possess a body or the sense organs when he takes the form of a seed or plant.

xii. Once he takes birth as a human, he has to undergo the travails and tribulations of life, growth, senescence, death, travel to the other worlds, and once again being born on the earth. This repetitive cycle of *samsAra* is inevitable till one achieves liberation.

Leela-P: Goddess! What you say about the repeated cycles of births and deaths sounds quite reasonable with respect to normal beings. Hiranyagarbha, the very first individual in creation was also a separate entity. Does he also undergo these cycles?

Saraswati: Leela-P ! Hiranyagarbha does not suffer any illusions. An ordinary individual, while projecting the world on himself, forgets his true nature. Hiranyagarbha also projects a world. But he does not forget the reality. If one does not lose one's intrinsic qualities, one does not suffer an illusion. Though the superimposed world does appear to Hiranyagarbha, He never takes it to be real. Hence He does not fall into the cycle of birth and death.

You said that he was also a separate individual. Who is a separate individual (*jīva*) ? A separate individual is Consciousness delimited by an adjunct (*upādhi*). He is also described as a reflection of the Consciousness in the adjunct.

An adjunct has two components: 1. The Consciousness part, and 2. The superimposing inert part. The Consciousness part accesses the gross body through intellect (*buddhi*). The intellect along with the Consciousness part reaches the sphere of the sensory organs. One knows the objects of the world through the sphere of the sensory organs. The objects in the world, the senses, the intellect, and the limiting adjunct are all inert substances only. Consciousness pervades them all.

The ordinary individual forgets who he/she is in reality. Hiranyagarbha knew his true intrinsic nature to be Consciousness. Because of this reason, He is not subjected to the cycle of births and deaths. One should not miss to note this difference.

57. Twists and Turns in the discussion

Saraswati: Leela ! Our discussion took many turns. Let us recapitulate the various points.

1. Your first question was about the reaction of the royal cohorts in King Padma's palace on seeing Leela-V in their midst. I told you that since all of them were in illusion, their behaviour would be as usual as per their norm.

2. Your next question was why Leela-V had to go to her husband in her subtle body and not in her physical body. I replied that once the subtle body was obtained, the gross body would not exist anymore.

3. At that point we digressed to discuss in detail the issue of subtle and gross bodies and whether the world existed inside or outside the mind.

4. A question then came up about the regular internal order (*niyati*) that was seen within the imaginary world. I answered that the order arose as per the intentions of Hiranyagarbha at the time of creation.

5. On the question whether the systematic internal order was applicable only to the inert objects or also to the living beings and their cycle of births and deaths, I said it was equally valid for all.

6. Next we discussed the nature of death, whether the death was to the body or to Consciousness, whether the process of dying was the same to all, the changes that the body would go through at the time of death and how he/she would move in the form of a spirit after the death of the gross body.

7. You enquired whether Hiranyagarbha would also undergo the cycle of births and deaths. I answered that he wouldn't because he would never lose sight of his true nature.

Leela P ! The trust of our discussion had so far been to examine the nature of reality of the different worlds experienced by the living beings. We shall now see how it is related to the principle objective of our discourse.

We have been throwing around two words – the individual being and the world. How do we understand these two words ? We take it that the individual being is a conscious entity. We consider the world to be a mix of inert objects and consciousness. We have to determine whether this understanding is valid or not. An inert object is that which is superimposed by our intellect on to our Consciousness. What we call as sentient is also a superimposition. The substrate for both is Consciousness. The difference is only in the name and form. In spite of the fact that the substratum on which they rest is the same, these two are unable to know one another.

The situation is something like:

यथा शिलान्तःसंस्थानां बहिष्ठानां च वेदनम् ।
असज्जडं च भेकानां मिथोऽन्तस्तस्थुषां तथा ।।

yathā śilāntaḥsaṃsthānāṃ bahiṣṭhānāṃ ca vedanam |
asajjaḍaṃ ca bhekānāṃ mitho'ntastasthuṣāṃ tathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 55, Sloka 63

A frog sitting inside a rock does not know the frog sitting outside.

To give a different analogy,

यथोत्तराब्धिजनता दक्षिणाब्धिजनं स्थितम् ।

yathottarābdhijanatā dakṣiṇābdhijanaṃ sthitam |

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 55, Sloka 61

The person on the northern shores of an ocean does not know that the people on the southern shores are also like him only.

The internal order conceived by Hiranyagarbha at the commencement of creation continues to today without any alteration. The fact that we experience some objects and things to be inert and some others as sentient is also because of the order established by the collective consciousness in the form of Hiranyagarbha at the very beginning.

If an object is associated with the life-force, it is called sentient. Otherwise, it is described as insentient. There is no other difference between the insentient and sentient objects. The distinctions seen in these worldly objects are something like an amusing pastime. The strange part is that the unreal things produce a feel of reality. Whatever happens within it, happens because of the past impressions only.

Leela-P! Watch now. The self of Viduratha would be entering the heart sphere of the dead body of your husband, lying there bedecked in flowers.

58. The Path of the Impressions

Leela-P: Goddess ! What is the path that Viduratha's self takes ? Should we not follow him?

Saraswati: The individual self always travels to any world along the route that the impressions take.There is no other way. He has the impression that the body of King Padma is his. So he goes by that path only. We shall follow the same route.

[**Note:** While the two ladies were conversing thus, Viduratha's mind stiffened. He became unconscious. His eyes rolled back. He gasped for breath. *Rigor mortis* set in the body. The life-force left his body like a bird flying away from a falling tree. The individual self began to move fast in space. Both Leela-P and Saraswati observed the movement with their clairvoyant vision.]

The individual self was followed by his thought-waves. Together they became his subtle body. That was the *ātivāhika deha*. The past impressions were present within the subtle individual self-consciousness (*ātivāhikajīva caitanya*). It travelled in the open space in conformity with those impressions. The turbulence and the tumult that had occurred at the time of the death subsided eventually. The messengers of Lord Yama (God of Death) appeared before Viduratha. He could feel that another body formed for him as a result of the last rites performed by his kith and kin. He reached the celestial city of death in that body. The city was overcrowded with many individual selves. Lord Yama commanded his servants on seeing him to let him free as he was not only virtuous but was also blessed by the grace of Saraswati. Yama said that his body from his previous birth was preserved safely in flowers.

The messengers released him and immediately he shot into space like a bullet

यन्त्रोपल इव च्युतः *yantropala iva chyutaḥ*

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 15

The self of Viduratha was not able to see Leela and Saraswati but they were able to see him. The three travelled for quite some time, passed through many worlds, crossed the universe and entered another universe. They reached the palace of King Padma in that universe

सूर्यभासो यथाम्भोजं सुरभिः पवनं यथा ।।

sūryabhāso yathāmbhojaṃ surabhiḥ pavanaṃ yathā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 19.

Their entry into the chambers of King Padma resembled a Sun ray entering a lotus.

[**Note:** At this point, Sri Rama had a doubt.]

Rama: Teacher! How did Viduratha's self know the way? Who had navigated him and provided the directions?

Vasishta: Rama! Please appreciate that the question of directions arises only when there is actual travel. Many strange things take place during the course of several lives. Sometimes it may so happen that while the life in a particular birth caused by certain impressions is in progress, another birth may be triggered due to some other stronger impressions getting activated even before that former life period is completed. Once the second life period is over, the former life may resume under the influence of the remaining part of the former impressions. In such a case, all the events of the first life come back into memory.

The case of Viduratha was exactly like that. Within the life period of King Padma, the life of Viduratha came up even before the completion of experiencing life as Padma.

Therefore, the self of Viduratha did not lose the attachment to that of Padma' life. The life of Padma was recessive for the time Viduratha's life was dominant. Once Viduratha's life was over, Padma's life became dominant to express itself. The thought-wave that "I am Padma" within those impressions contained Padma's body. Because of that, Viduratha's self could find and reach Padma's body. As a matter of fact, Viduratha's body, Padma's body, the impressions causal for both the bodies were all within the mind of that individual self. They have not come from anywhere outside.

We can clearly see this story as a text book example of what we discussed previously – the entire universe is within the mind of the individual self and it manifests because of imagination. I shall give you an analogy.

Say, a person hid his treasure in a pit dug below the ground under a tree in a forest. He comes and lives in the nearby village. But his mind is always filled with thoughts about that particular spot under the tree in the forest. He visualises mentally the pit with his treasure all the time. How could that be possible? It is possible because of the impression preserved in his mind that "This is my treasure." What route did his mind take? It goes by the path laid by the thought wave that "this wealth is mine." From this analogy, it is clear that the world is a consequence of the impressions carried within the mind.

Viduratha's self could reach Padma's dead body following the path of impressions. Irrespective of the number of lives (births), irrespective of the distances involved, a thing present within the impressions of a person would be directly perceived by him. How long will he be able to perceive it? Until the impression fructifies whatever result it has to yield. Until then, neither the impression leaves nor the object carried within that impression goes.

59. Effect of performing last rites

Rama: Teacher! You say that a new body forms as a result of the last rites performed by the dead person's relatives. What will happen if the relatives do not perform the last rites?

Vasishta: Rama! It is not important whether the relatives performed the last rites or not. It is enough if a thought wave that 'My kith and kin did the last rites for me,' is present in the mind of that individual self. Impressions corresponding to that thought wave will form and a new body will take shape based on those impressions.

However, there are two results that arise from the performance of last rites:

- The performer of the last rites gains merit (puNya).
- The one that died gets the impressions.

Of these, the former occurs when relatives perform the last rites and the latter occurs according to the impression present in the self that has died. The first if the relative really performs the rites and the second as per the thoughts of the dead individual.

यच्चित्तं तन्मयो जन्तुर्भवतीत्यनुभूतयः ।
सदेहेषु विदेहेषु न भवत्यन्यथा क्वचित् ।।

yaccittaṃ tanmayo janturbhavatītyanubhūtayaḥ |
sadeheṣu videheṣu na bhavatyanyathā kvacit ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 56, Sloka 28

The separate individual self is mind-stuff (*manomaya*). What it experiences is whatever it imagines. Whether one is with the physical body or without, it is all the same. Things do not happen any differently. Therefore, it is enough if an impression that 'the relatives performed the last rites' has formed. A new body will take shape based on that impression. Usually, an impression gets formed from experiencing objects. So when the relatives perform the last rites, an impression does definitely get established. In the case of some dead persons an impression may form even if the last rites are not done.

Rama: Teacher! Suppose a sinner is dead. He has the impression that 'I have not accumulated merit'. But at that time, say, his friend performed a virtuous deed and donated the resultant effect for the benefit of the dead man. The friend bears the impression that 'I have done a meritorious act and donated the good effects to my friend.' The dead person has the impression that 'I have no virtues.' Out of the two impressions, which will prevail? If only the impression of the actual experiencer counts, it would imply that his friend's action has no effect. How can there be an action which has no effect?

If you hold that whether one experiences or not is unimportant and what is more important is the nature of reality behind the objects giving rise to an impression, his friend's action has to be fruitful. If so, it will contradict what you said a while ago -- that 'to produce an effect or a result, the presence of an impression is adequate.'

So Sir, kindly explain how this conundrum gets resolved.

Vasishta: Rama! If the friend had performed some meritorious act as sanctioned by the scriptures and donated its effect for the benefit of the dead man, the resultant impression will predominate. It stands to be so not because of the nature of reality of the object but because of the evidence of the scriptures.

The impression that 'I have no merit' is purely based on the thoughts of the dead man. It has no scriptural validity. Hence it is weak. The merit transferred by the friend through the performance of the virtuous act prevails as it has scriptural sanction and support. In case you suppose that the resultant effect would be based on the nature of the reality of the substance behind the action, one should get the same result even when an atheist (a non-believer in the scriptures) performs the action just out of curiosity as an experiment.

Such an action will not bear fruit. The scriptures say so and we also find it to be so from practical experience. The scriptural position is the last word with respect to any questions regarding the impressions.

Rama: Teacher! You say that the impressions from the actions carried out in accordance with the scriptures will dominate. But the scriptural sanction is highly contextual – that is to say it depends on the time, space and circumstances. It amounts to saying that time and space are important factors in the formation of impressions.

We contend that the entire creation is a result of our impressions. If creation has arisen out of impressions and if the formation of the impressions is governed by time and place, it means that time and space are behind the appearance of the world. In turn it would imply that space and time existed prior to creation. But it cannot be so, for the non-dual *brahman* is ever the substratum on which the creation manifests. How do you reconcile this?

Vasishta: That is exactly my position. Time and space do not exist prior to creation. But without time and space, there cannot be creation. Therefore, if you find that an object has appeared even in the absence of the enabling factors like space and time, we have to conclude that the appearance is only a magic, an illusion. It is *mithya*. All such objects are said to be illusory objects in general parlance. That is the reason why Vedanta emphatically declares the creation to be unreal. What I am going to establish through the story of Leela is that very point. Now, let us get back to the story of Leela.

Leela-P and Saraswati reached the Kingdom of Padma. They noticed the body of King Padma placed in flowers. Leela-V stood beside the body staring at her husband with her head slightly bent to the left supported by her left hand. Her face was looking tired. She appeared to be an exact replica of Leela-P. She was fanning the corpse. Since Leela-P and Saraswati have the capacity to visualize their thoughts, they were able to see Leela-V. But Leela-V did not have that ability. So she was not able to see Leela-P and Saraswati.

60. Realized Individuals are with subtle bodies only

Rama: Leela-P had been meditating in that house before she went out in her subtle body. So her gross body should still be there. Why are you not speaking about it?

Vasishta: Rama! Suppose a person had a dream that he was born as a fawn. Will he search for the body of the fawn after he wakes up? Never. Similarly, Leela-P is awakened now; she attained Self-Knowledge. The entire wakeful world appears as a dream to her. That is to say, she used to take the world that appeared before her to be real previously. Now, she sees the forms and hears the sounds, but everything is permeated by *Brahman*. So in her current perception, there is no 'Beingness' to her previous body.

Rama: Revered Teacher! Do you mean to say that the realized individuals would have only subtle bodies and no gross bodies? But we often see realized individuals alive and kicking in their gross bodies. We find them moving around in their physical bodies!

Vasishta: Rama! There are two types of bodies and two types of death to the realized individuals.

1. In order to exhaust quickly the balance of the effects of past actions that had begun to yield the results in the current life (called *prārabdha karma* – the current suffrage that has already set in to fructify), a realized individual wears multiple bodies at one and the same time. Because he leaves the old body in order to put on these new bodies, you may say that this is a type of death only. The previous physical body does not exist for him. The newly acquired bodies are all his own imaginary creations only.
2. Once the realized individual exhausts completely the *prārabdha karma*, he attains *videhakaivalya* (liberation without body). It is also a death. The previous physical body will not remain.

The truly realized individual is one who has attained one or other of the two types of death. There is no scope for him to possess a physical body. The liberation without the body (*videhakaivalya*) has a peculiar feature. Once he attains liberation without the body, the physical body does not suddenly disappear into thin air. The body will slowly disintegrate like a block of ice melting in sunlight. Because of this slow process, the onlookers may see an illusory body to be present. In fact, the body of a realized individual can be seen by others only if he intends so. It cannot be seen by others if he does not wish to. Therefore, it is not that others see his body because it is there. They see courtesy the wish of the realized individual to make a body visible to outsiders. In the absence of such an intention, even other Yogis will not be able to see his body.

There is another way to look at it. As far as the liberated individual is concerned, he does not have a body. But others who have certain virtuous deeds to their credit may be able to see a physical body for the liberated man. If the number of virtuous deeds of the onlooker decrease, the liberated man may appear to have died.

A good example for this is the case of Sage Shuka, son of Maharishi Vyasa. Sage Shuka, even after attaining *videhamukti (videhakaivalya)*, reappeared in the congregation of King Parikshit, owing to the King's store of virtuous deeds. He preached the epic '*bhāgavata*.'

All in all, there is no surprise if a physical body for a liberated man is seen by the ordinary folk.

Rama: Sir! Will the gross physical body of the liberated individual transform into the subtle (*ātivāhika*) body or will a new one get manufactured?

I ask you this question because there is a lack of clarity. After all, once the Self-Knowledge is obtained, the old sublates, that is to say it gets negated along with its cause. Hence, it is not possible for that body to have been changed to a subtler one.

On the other hand, if it were to be said that a new body, however subtle it may be, formed for a realized man, it indicates that he lost the Self-Knowledge.

Neither argument seems to hold. Please explain this to me.

Vasishta:

बहुशो ह्युक्तमेतत्ते न गृह्णासि किमुत्तम ।
तिवाहिक एवास्ति नास्त्येवेहाधिभौतिकः ।।

bahuśo hyuktametatte na gṛhṇāsi kimuttama |
ativāhika evāsti nāstyevehādhibhautikaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 57, Sloka 29

Rama, I repeated it so many times! Why don't you follow? There is no such thing as a gross body. 'What is' is the subtle body only. It is seen as gross out of sheer habit of thinking it to be so. Once you understand using your discrimination that there is nothing physical about it, the grossness disappears and only the subtle body remains.

Rama: If the subtle body changes to be the physical body, from where does the subtle body get the qualities like density, solidity etc. which were not present in it earlier? How do these new characteristics dissolve on the attainment of Self-Knowledge?

Vasishta: Is it not your subtle body that becomes physical with weight and solidity in your dreams? When you wake up, don't those physical attributes disappear?

Once the physical body is cremated after its death, even in the case of the ordinary ignorant people, their subtle body gets released. They travel to the other world in that subtle body. What's the big deal if the natural subtle body remains after it is sublated in the case of the realized individuals?

After all, the realized men are already free of impressions as they have obtained Self-Knowledge. They get the Consciousness-body while they are still alive.
Everyone thinks that he is a solid entity in his awake state. So he imagines himself to be solid in his dreams too. In contrast, if he realizes that he is not a gross individual while he is awake, he will remember it in his dream state and will have a subtle body during dreaming.

Remembrance has so much power within it. It is true that such a remembrance does not come about to the ordinary folk when they dream. But for those who are adept at focused meditation, it happens when they are awake or dreaming.

Rama: Teacher! Is it not a matter of concern if we say that the existing body will be lost on the attainment of Self-Realization?

Vasishta: Rama! Not at all. Will anyone who knows cry for the disappearance of the silver in nacre?

61. Resurrection of King Padma

Rama: Revered Teacher! My doubts with respect to the former (physical body) of Leela-P are cleared. Let us continue with the story.

Both Leela-s met in the chambers of King Padma. Did the servants and others present in the house recognize Leela-P when they saw her after she made herself visible with her strong intentions? Could they identify her as their old Leela or they mistook her to be an angel?

Vasishta: They took her to be their own old Leela. They considered Leela-V to be her friend. They did not entertain any doubts. They are ignoramuses. They take things at their face value. They are not accustomed to examine things in-depth. They are more like lumps of soil. When you throw a lump, say, against a tree trunk, it would not penetrate the trunk as an arrow would. Nor will it stick to the tree like clay. It will not hurt the tree like a stony pebble. The poor thing crumbles into powder and falls down.

That's the way the simpletons behave. They do not question the reality of the world. They just believe it to be real. Earlier we discussed quite a few reasons to say that the visible world was not real. I shall present here a few more to buttress the argument.
A real thing will be the knower and not the known. The world is known as an object in our experience. Hence it cannot be real.

Consciousness will never be without Beingness. We sometimes find that the objects of the world lose their beingness. That means that they are not conscious entities. Therefore, they cannot be real. In other words, they are unreal.

A real thing never disappears on the realization of the Self-Knowledge (brahman). We find from the evidence of accomplished Yogi-s (those who attained Self-Knowledge) that the world gets dissolved on realization of the Ultimate Truth. Therefore, the world cannot be real.

I talked about the unreality of the world because the topic has come up in our discussions. We shall get back to the main story now.

After Leela-P, Saraswati and Viduratha reached the palace of King Padma, Viduratha was about to enter the body of King Padma. But Saraswati stopped him with her will power. At the same time, Leela-P inquired from Saraswati for how long she had been in deep meditation (*samādhi*) at that place.

Saraswati: Leela-P! I shall narrate to you the story of your previous body. It has been a month since you had entered into deep meditation sitting beside the dead body of your husband. The two maids taking care of you have fallen asleep now.

About fifteen days after you entered the state of *samādhi* controlling your breath, your body became very hot. It sweated and fell to the side. By the time the ministers came and saw, your body was already cold and dead. They were all grief stricken. With heavy hearts, they performed the last rites in a manner befitting to the royalty. Because they heard the celestial voice announce that King Padma would come back to life again, and also because his body was still radiant, they kept the body protected. They did not perform the last rites for him.

Finding you back again here with the same body, they presumed that you returned from Heaven. You are, however, in the pure subtle body which is invisible to them. But they are able to see you in your previous body because of your strong intentions. That's the wonder happening here.

You achieved satyasankalpa siddhi (the power to manifest things as per one's thoughts). So you can appear in any form you wish. You thought that you should appear in your previous form. So you appear in that form. You attained the Supreme Knowledge. You are in the subtle body. But the past impressions are not yet completely eradicated. You still have some left over impressions connected with your previous body. That is why you got that body now. If a seeker gets firmly established in the subtle form, he will not conceive of physical forms anymore. Even if the outsiders happen to see a physical form for him, he himself will not have any such notions.

Thirty one days have passed since you had entered the deep meditative state. We are in Consciousness-space now. It was I who induced sleep into both your attendants this morning. Leela-P! Let us intend to appear before Leela-V. She will then be able to see us.
In no time after they thought of appearing before Leela-V, she could see them both. Leela-V is stunned at the sudden manifestation of the two ladies. They were radiating bright light. Leela-V prostrated to them. She welcomed them with reverence and seated them on thrones.

Saraswati: Leela-V! You reached here ahead of us. How was your journey? Did you find anything interesting on your way?

Leela-V: Mother! I fainted and lost consciousness in our house. I died soon afterwards and soared up into space. Through the celestial path I reached back here. I found my husband, Viduratha, deep in sleep in a bed of flowers. I surmised that he fell asleep after a strenuous fight in the ongoing war. So I am fanning him without disturbing him in his sleep. Now both of you have been kind to visit me.

Vasishta: (Continuing the discourse): Goddess Saraswati who was holding back the 'self' of Viduratha thus far released it. Immediately, Viduratha's self along with its past impressions entered the body of King Padma. Saraswati asked the two Leela-s to join her in helping the King to get up. As the 'self' had by then entered the body, his organs resumed functioning, the circulation of the fluids in the body was restored and his face brightened. He got up and called for his attendants. The two Leela-s bowed to him and asked for his command. He felt lost on seeing the two ladies who looked exactly alike. He enquired from them who they were and from where they came. Without losing time, Leela-P answered the King as follows.

Leela-P: My Lord! I am your first wife. I brought this reflection of mine, the second Leela, for your sake. The divine lady sitting over there is the Mother of the Universe, Goddess Saraswati. It is with her blessing that we could travel from another world and come to you.

Vasishta: On hearing what Leela-P said, the King prostrated to Saraswati and prayed to her to grant him long life, wealth and the wisdom to realize the ultimate truth.

सरस्वति नमस्तुभ्यं देवि सर्वहितप्रदे ।
प्रयच्छ वरदे मेधां दीर्घमायुर्धनानि च ।।

sarasvati namastubhyaṃ devi sarvahitaprade |
prayaccha varade medhāṃ dīrghamāyurdhanāni ca ||

Utpatti Prakaranam, Sarga 58, Sloka 51

Saraswati touched his head affectionately and granted him the boons accordingly.

सर्वापदः सकलदुष्कृतदृष्टयश्च
गच्छन्तु वः शममनन्तसुखानि सम्यक् ।
आयान्तु नित्यमुदिता जनता भवन्तु
राष्ट्रेस्थिराश्च विलसन्तु सदैव लक्ष्म्यः ।।

sarvāpadaḥ sakaladuṣkṛtadṛṣṭayaśca
gacchantu vaḥ śamamanantasukhāni samyak |
āyāntu nityamuditā janatā bhavantu
rāṣṭresthirāśca vilasantu sadaiva lakṣmyaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakaranam, Sarga 58, Sloka 53

Saraswati said, “My son! May all your adversities be removed! May the sinful desires be destroyed! May you get immense happiness! May the people of your country be ever happy! May the wealth flourish in your Kingdom!” and disappeared.

It was soon dawn. All the people woke up. The royal retinue thought that Leela-P had come back from heavens, getting life again after death. They were happy and hugged each other in celebration. Word spread like wild fire that Leela-P had attained spiritual powers, she resurrected the King from death and that she also brought another wife for him.

King Padma, who was reborn, was still disoriented. He was pleased that he was reborn after learning the things from the persons around.

He went for a holy bath and performed certain purificatory rituals. His ministers, other satraps and subjects, gathered to admire the nobility and exceptional accomplishment of their King and Queen. They recoronated him with pomp and glory.

यदुदयविशदं विदग्धमुग्धं
समुचितमात्महितं च पेशलं च ।
तदखिलजनतोषदं स्वराज्यं
चिरमनुपाल्य सुदंपती विमुक्तौ ।।

yadudayaviśadaṃ vidagdhamugdhaṃ
samucitamātmahitaṃ ca peśalaṃ ca |
tadakhilajanatoṣadaṃ svarājyaṃ
ciramanupālya sudaṃpatī vimuktau ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 59, Sloka 18

Over the course of a few years, the King attained Self-realization having been tutored by both his queens. The three used to spend time together discussing the Supreme Truth. He ruled the Kingdom benevolently for 80,000 years as far as the worldly facet of his life was concerned. Eventually all the three of them attained kaivalya (Supreme Aloneness).

62. Lessons from the Story of Leela

Thus did the story of Leela end. Sage Vasishta already explained the purpose of the story before commencing the narration. After its completion, he once again summarized the salient points emerging out of it. However, he did not elaborate on the characters, their personalities, events they experienced and so on. He left that analysis to Rama. Sage Valmiki too did not add any further comment. We shall briefly highlight some of the points to be noted from this story.

i) Characters in the story (View 1):

The story started with two characters – King Padma and his queen Leela. They were with their gross bodies at the beginning of the story. By the end of the story, they became three characters – King Padma, Leela-P and Leela-V. When the story ended, King Padma had a gross body; Leela-V, as a liberated individual, had a physical body but with certain residual impressions remaining. Leela-P attained Consciousness-body.

From the perspective of the royal cohorts, Leela-P had gone to Heavens and returned. She brought another lady, looking just like her and gifted the lady to her husband to be his second wife. The two ladies had excellent rapport.

In the opinion of King Padma, Leela-V was his mistress. Leela-P was previously his wife and had now obtained Self-realization.

The perspective of Leela-V was as follows: The entire world was *mithya*. She had still retained in her mind traces of impressions. Because of that, she had a desire to be subservient to her husband. However, after reaching the world of King Padma, she had no personal desires of her own.

ii) Characters in the story (View 2):

Leela-V was under the impression that she was in her physical body. King Padma and all others too considered her to be so. King Padma and other people as well believed that Leela-P was also with her physical body. They placed her on a higher pedestal considering her to have attained Self realization.They felt that she brought another wife for King Padma because she obtained liberation.

The perspective of Leela-P was, however, that nobody including herself possessed a body. Even the world did not exist for her.

The perspective of Leela-V was that while Leela-P did not have any body at all, she had only a facetious (ābhāsa) body. She considered the world also to be imaginary and unreal.

iii) Analysis of the story in the light of these characters:

It is commonly believed that births occur one after the other. However, nobody really stops to ask what exactly is the meaning of the world 'after'? Sage Vasishta teaches that the word is very significant and its meaning is not what is normally assumed to be. We find in the above story, Leela-V was born even when Leela-P was alive. Leela-V was not the next birth of Leela-P. She was also not a second body of Leela-P. Nor was she a part of Leela-P. She was an individual born out of the residual impressions in the mind of King Padma after his death. When an individual dies in one body and then is born again in another body, it is known as "rebirth" in common parlance.

Leela-V desired to go to the world of her husband in her own body. Goddess Saraswati granted her that her wish would be fulfilled. Still, it did not happen in that way. Her previous body died where she was. She came to King Padma's world. She did not have a gross body. Nevertheless, she firmly believed that she was in the gross body. That belief was there because of the power of Saraswati. Because of her strong belief, she saw herself in her physical body. Even others too perceived a gross body for her.

iv) Sage Vasishta's Message in the story:

What was the reason for Sage Vasishta to retain the character of Leela-V till the end in the story? Why was an extra wife to King Padma introduced?

Sage Vasishta's intention in narrating this story was to establish that space, time and location as well as bodies were all merely conceptual entities and had no true 'beingness.' Towards that end he fabricated three incidents in his narration. The Kingdom of Padma was shown to exist within the hut of Vasishta Brahmana. The war field where Viduratha fought was shown to exist within the bedroom of King Padma. The Sage wanted to impress on the reader with the above examples that there was no such thing as 'location in space.'

It was said that it had been only eight days since Vasishta Brahmana died. The same 8 days were shown to be equal to 60 years and 30 days in the case of King Padma, and 60 years in the case of Viduratha. If one were to count sequentially, the total period of the lives of these people should have been 120 years and 38 days. But it was stated in the story that all of it happened in a moment.

The Sage wanted to impress on the reader with the above examples that 'absolute time' did not exist. Leela-V, as per the story, did not have a body in the world of King Padma. But it was said that she herself as well as all others believed that she had a gross physical body. It was also indicated that King Padma was leading a married life with her.
He concocted two Leela-s. The Sage wanted to impress on the reader with the above examples that there was no solid thing as a 'body' and that possession of a body was nothing more than a belief.

v) The existence of the body was a Mentation:

It was said that in the world of King Padma the dead body of the King was kept in a flower bed in order to prevent its decay. But the body of Leela was said to have been cremated. It was because of the strong intentions of Leela-P, the body of King Padma stayed without disintegrating. What was shown to be a boon granted by Goddess Saraswati actually signified her own strong will. In spite of having such a strong will, Leela was unaware that her body was burnt away. She came to know only from Saraswati when she specifically inquired about her body. The Sage wanted to impress on the reader with the above examples that the feeling of having a body was pure mentation only. A body was existent as long as there was an intention to have one. In the absence of a focused intention, it would be immaterial whether a body was existent or not.

vi) Retention of the character Leela-P till the end of the story:

One of the ideas of Sage Vasishta in narrating the story was to demonstrate the coexistence of a totally Self-realized individual having only a Consciousness-body, a liberated individual with certain impressions still left over in him and an ordinary seeker. Leela-P was a liberated individual possessing special accomplishments like the ability to see the materialization of her thoughts. Even with all that it was possible to retain some traces of past impressions. It was because of the presence of residual traces of some past impressions, she returned to live in the house of King Padma.

In spite of having traces of residual impressions, the liberated individuals stay completely unaffected and unattached. This point gets demonstrated from the example of Leela-P.

vii) Progressive Stages in enlightenment:

Sage Vasishta indicated through this story the progressive steps by which a seeker moves along the path of liberation. Vasishta Brahmana, though was an orthodox and punctilious Brahmin, had to be reborn as a ruler because of his infatuation over wealth.
But his wife owing to her single minded commitment to her husband gained both wealth and wisdom in her next birth. King Padma, under the influence of the impressions gained from his previous life of being a *brahmaṇa,* worshipped Saraswati with a desire for liberation. By the virtue of this worship, he was able to get the company of noble individuals in his next life as Padma. Eventually he attained liberation. Thus was the path by which a seeker travels towards liberation.

The author, Sage Valmiki, introduced the character of Goddess Saraswati as central to the story. He referred to her at many places in the narration as the "Knower." Knower means one who has Self-Knowledge. This was symbolic of the fact that the occasional flashes of Knowledge that arise in the minds of the people are responsible to carry them forward on the path of liberation. That was the gist that we could extract from this elaborately fabricated story of Sage Vasishta. Now let us hear what the Sage said in his own words.

63. Sage Vasishta's Explanation of the Story of Leela

Vasishta: Rama! You would have by now understood my purpose in telling you the story of Leela. I briefed you about a few things before I actually took up the story.

दृश्यं नास्तीति बोधेन मनसो दृश्यमार्जनं
सम्पन्नं चेत्तदा प्राप्ता परा निर्वाण निवृत्तिरिति

dṛśyaṃṃ nāstīti bodhena manaso dṛśyamārjanaṃ
sampannaṃ cettadā prāptā parā nirvāṇa nivṛttiriti

From the commentary of Sri Ananda Bodhendra Saraswati Swamy

One should realize that there is no 'percept.' When this understanding arises all the perceivables will get totally erased from the mind. And that is what '*mokśa*' (liberation) is. I narrated the story to reinforce the above point.

Imagine *Brahman* to be 'Rain.' The world then would be a hailstone, a condensation of the rain water. When the hailstone melts in the heat of sunlight, it will turn back to be water only. Likewise, under the warmth of Self-Knowledge, the physical world dissolves to remain as *brahman*. After all, the appearance of the world has come about as a result of *Brahman* projecting it onto Himself through the process of changeless change (*vivarta*). No wonder then what remains back again is *brahman,* once the projection process ends.

Rama: Teacher ! The process of creation-dissolution anyway goes on. What's the need for me to strive for liberation?

Vasishta: It is not as simple as that. Our effort is also necessary. When you speak of the entire world, its collective Consciousness, i.e. the Consciousness of Hiranyagarbha, is like a mighty river. The Consciousness of a separate individual within it is like a small stream out of it. Let us say that the tiny stream began to flow on its own along another course. Its path is called the *pravṛitti mārg* (the path that leads to mundane life). On this path the individual acquires a body and sensory organs. He gets habituated to experiencing happiness, sorrow and gets excited in the process . If the separate streamlet called the individual I-consciousness has to rejoin the main big river course, it has to drastically change its path. It has to almost retrace its course. The separated streamlet cannot reach back to the source river if it sits like a block of glacier doing nothing. Therefore, it is inevitable that everyone has to make an effort to get back to their original nature.

Rama: Sir! Hiranyagarbha purposefully divided the principal course into many branches. Is it proper then on the part of an ordinary individual to defy Hiranyagarbha's design and try to retrace the path in the reverse direction ? Can the tiny individual, even if he has a strong intention, succeed against the pattern established by the mighty Hiranyagarbha ? Will a servant be ever able to change the orders of the ruler ?

Vasishta: Rama! There is a subtle twist here. It is true that Hiranyagarbha created the world. But it never appears to Him as the world. That's because He is free of ignorance. Those who have ignorance see the world. The world is created as a field in order to facilitate the experiencing of the effects of the virtuous and evil actions done by finite individual beings. Therefore, it is necessary for them to make an effort to get rid of ignorance by acquiring Self-Knowledge. Only by such a process can they get rid of the appearance of the world. Hence, in substance, the effort of the individuals is not against the intentions of Hiranyagarbha.

64. Conversion Tables for Equivalence in Time Periods

Rama: Sir ! I am very grateful for the in-depth knowledge taught by you.

However, I lack clarity in one aspect. I know you have already explained it. I would like to make sure that I understood you correctly. Therefore, I pose this question to you.

It is evident that the 8 days since Vasishta Brahmana had died, the 30 days since the death of King Padma and the 60 years life span of Viduratha were equal.

The scriptures mention that one-month period in the human world is equivalent to one day in that of the manes (spirits of the dead elders), one year in of the human beings is equal to one day in the world of the gods and so on. Based on such information, one can create an Equivalence Table to convert the time periods of one world with that of the other. Is it possible to prepare such a table to link the time periods of the three worlds you talked about in the story of Leela -- the time periods in the worlds of Vasishta Brahmana, King Padma and Viduratha ? Or are there no rules of equivalence and the time periods are completely random?

Vasishta: Rama! What you said would be true in case there is a rule that the knowledge obtained about an object will strictly be dependent on the object. Then the equivalence or otherwise can be formulated as an equation. But it doesn't happen to be so. Knowledge does not emerge out of an object. Everyone conceives of an object in accordance with his/her knowledge (thought process) at that moment.

येन येन यथा यद्यद्यदा संवेद्यतेऽनघ ।
तेन तेन तथा तत्तत्तदा समनुभूयते ।।

yena yena yathā yadyadyadā saṃvedyate'nagha |
tena tena tathā tattattadā samanubhūyate ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 60, Sloka 16

In whatever way one thinks or imagines about an object at a given moment, he/she perceives that object in that particular way at that moment.

If one strongly conceptualizes a thing as an elixir of life, that thing will be so even if it happens to be a poison! After all, the poisonous critters live and thrive on poison. Don't they?

Pure Consciousness can take any form. What form it takes depends on the impressions (*samskāra*) present in the perceiver. By Itself, It is formless. The situation is no different with respect to time also. One specific individual, depending upon his/her stored impressions, may conceive of a single moment in (his) Consciousness.

Right there and then another individual, depending on his stored impressions, may superimpose an entire year on that very Consciousness. Yet a third individual at the same place and time may superimpose an entire epoch owing to his stored impressions.

Thus, what was a moment for one person is a year for the other and it is equivalent to an epoch to the third person. Turning it around, you may say that the epoch of the third person is just a moment for the first one. This is not just hypothetical. We see it happening all the time. Let me give you a very common example seen in the world. A single night without his wife is like more than a year for a newly married man. The entire night flies like a moment for the newly married man whose wife was with him. Such differences arise from the mental disposition of the individuals. We come across similar situations in dreams too.

Rama, when the worlds themselves are the fabrications arising out of the ignorance of the individual, what can you talk of the 'time' dimension within them ? The time factor has also got to be a fabrication. Can there be an Equivalence Table for their conversions ? The question does not arise at all !

Rama: Teacher! You say that the world is a fabrication, a projection, resulting from the stored impressions in the mind of the seer. King Padma was the seer in the 'Story of Leela' that you narrated. It appeared to him as if he was born as Viduratha and that Viduratha hailed from a dynasty having a very long genealogy. He witnessed the world of Viduratha because of the impressions stored in his mind. If so, whatever was seen by him should have been visible to him alone as he was the seer. But the same genealogy appeared to his ministers, nobility and the citizens too. Everyone notices a world as per one's own stored impressions. That being the case, how could all of them notice the same dynastic history for Viduratha?

Vasishta: Rama ! Suppose there is a gush of forceful wind blowing. Say a person stood against it and blew air with his mouth. The air blown by the person quickly changes direction and merges with the strong breeze. It will not be able to carve out an independent path to itself and stay separate. In the same way, the experiences of the subsidiary lives go in accordance with the lives of the principal characters. Nature operates by this principle.

An emperor, his satraps and ministers and their subjects take birth together at the same place, only if all of them have similar residual impressions stored as an effect of their past deeds. All of them think in about the same way. All of their experiences too will more or less be the same. So no wonder that the dynastic history of King Viduratha appeared to be the same to all of them.

Rama: Even if the people were to have similar impressions, why should the substrate Consciousness have to conform to those shapes?

Vasishta: There is no point in questioning the intrinsic nature of a thing. That's the way Consciousness is. And that's the way Consciousness acts.

Rama: Well, that would then mean that if an individual happens to have impressions which generate desire for worldly things, Consciousness takes the form of those things. In view of the fact that the worldly desires have been rehearsed for several generations, those desires would have gained immense strength. But you exhort him to strive to attain liberation. He would accept your instruction and that engenders a new impression. Because it's a recent one, it would not be as strong as the old persistent desires. So the old desires predominate. Viewed thus, it looks to me that it is not possible at all for anyone to achieve liberation.

Vasishta: No, what you say is not valid. The old impressions may have gathered certain strength undoubtedly. But the point is that the individual does not exert himself anymore on their behalf. On the contrary, he will work hard with determination for the fulfilment of the new desire, namely liberation. Over time. It will gain strength and outperform the old ones. Consequently, success is guaranteed for the new desire.

There is another reason too. The older desires are based on unreal worldly experiences. In contrast, the new desire has behind it the Ultimate Truth as its substrate.

Hence, for anyone who puts in the effort, liberation will vanquish the older impressions and success is guaranteed.

65. Grace is Intrinsic Order Combined with Human Effort

Rama: What you say may be true, Sir, with respect to those who work steadfastly and resolutely for liberation. But the effort of those who do not have a strong determination gets washed away as if swept off by a whirlwind every time. What is the way out for them?

Vasishta: Once they begin to make an effort, it gains strength. Eventually it reinforces itself. But they too should try to augment their effort.

Rama: Sir, I follow now. There is no valid reason for the imaginary identification of oneself with the body. Still the illusion, "I am the body" happens. There is no valid reason for the existence of a vast universe inside an atom. Still an illusory world is seen within the mind.

Millions and billions of years are seen, likewise, in the inside of a moment. The reason for all these is illusion, illusion and illusion only.

Is there any rule or rhyme for it? What is the reason for this illusion?

Vasishta: The answer in one word "None.". There are many illusory phenomena in the world. And there are equally a large number of 'things' which are no more than an illusion. But the 'Consciousness' with which all things are 'known' is only One. There are no varieties in that. That invariant 'Knowingness' is *Brahman*, the substrate on which all illusory phenomena take place. If *Brahman* is gold, the ear stud, the ring, the bangle, the bracelet, the necklace etc. are the 'things' which are the illusory appearances.

Every time it is the same old impression that causes a new imagination. No beginning can be found for the stream of continuous imaginations. So it would be a fruitless search if we look for its cause. As long as the mind which is a place holder for the imaginations exists, the series of manifested manifolds is inevitable. If the mind is eliminated through practice, the whole series of imaginary appearances will end at one stroke. I spoke about this to you earlier.

Do these manifestations, the series of appearances, follow a rule or rhyme ? If the appearances were to be true, there could be a rule, an internal order to them. The illusory things do not follow any order. Any number of jungles can appear as reflections in a mirror.

अहंमयी पद्मजभावना चित् संकल्पभेदाद्वितनोति विश्वम् ।
अन्तर्मुखैवानुभवत्यनन्त निमेषकोट्यंशविधौ युगान्तम् ।।

ahaṃmayī padmajabhāvanā cit saṃkalpabhedādvitanoti viśvam |
āntarmukhaivānubhavatyananta- nimeṣakoṭyaṃśavidhau yugāntam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 61, Sloka 38

The thought-wave of I-ness (an intention) in Hiranyagarbha creates the whole universe. In the same way it experiences multiple eons (*Yuga-s*) in an infinitismally small fraction of a moment.

What can one say about *māyā*, the phantasm? Not merely the individual creatures, even the composite of all beings, Hiranyagarbha is affected by its time and space differentiations. Neither a reason nor a rule can ever be found for this phantasmagoria.

Rama: Revered Teacher! A body continues to be present even for those noble people who could overcome *māyā* and attain Self-Knowledge. Leela-P of our story too retained the body. How does one account for the presence of the body?

We cannot say that the body was retained because of the operative intrinsic natural laws (a divine order), because no such natural law (a divinity) exists from their perspective. Further, the Vedas also declare:

तस्य ह न देवाश्चनाभूत्या ईशते । आत्मा ह्येषां स भवति

tasya ha na devāścanābhūtyā īśate | ātmā hyeṣāṃ sa bhavati

1.4.10, brihadāraṇyaka ūpaniśad

Even gods cannot do anything to the Knowers of Supreme Self.

Vasishta: Rama! The Divine Lord, Ishwara is different from the gods. It is true that, as the Vedas say, the gods cannot do anything to affect the Knowers of the Self.

The Divine Lord Ishwara is none other than the intrinsic natural law and order (*niyati*). '*niyati*' arises from the intentions of the Creator, Hiranyagarbha. None can escape it. The Knowers of Self are also governed by it. What facilitates the functioning of the natural law and order is the effect of actions done by the created beings (creatures). Even the Knowers of the Self get to retain sometimes a body as a result of the strange consequences arising from the combination of the effect of the actions done and the Law and order.

In this context, let me also add the following here. The Divine Lord's intentions take shape in two flavors – one is the law and order (*niyati*) and the other is human effort.

The intention of the Divine Lord is initially just a potentiality for the manifestation of an effect (a thing or event) in the future. It takes shape as the current happening when it is aided by human effort. Therefore, a spiritual aspirant should conscientiously make an effort to realize his goal. In the absence of one's own effort, nothing happens even though the Divine Lord as *niyati* is potentially and favourably inclined to grant liberation.

The Knowers of Self have no sense of 'doership' for actions. They do not on purpose work for the eradication of the effect of their past actions. Hence, they will not put in any effort to neutralize the actions that precipitated a body for them. Their *karma* (the residual effect of their past actions) together with *niyati* (the divine order) support the appearance of a body to them (the realized individuals).

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta continued his discourse describing excitedly that the visible world comprising the triad of experiencer, experiencing and the experienced was a delightful amusement of the Supreme *Brahman*. Sage Valmiki at this juncture introduced into the text eleven sentences in prose instead of the usual poetry. These eleven sentences in the 63rd canto are memorable for their beauty and deep meaning. Rama heard the sermon with rapt attention matching with the exhilaration of Sage Vasishta. But a doubt arose in his mind.]

66. Beingness to the Individual

Rama :

स्वानुभूतिप्रमाणेऽस्मिन्ब्रह्मणि ब्रह्मबृंहिते ।
कथं सत्तामवाप्नोति जीवको द्वैतवर्जिते ।।

svānubhūtipramāṇe'sminbrahmaṇi brahmabṛṃhite |
kathaṃ sattāmavāpnoti jīvako dvaitavarjite ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 64, Sloka 3

When *'brahman,'* who is one without a second, can be known experientially only by one's own self by each individual, how could each separate individual (*jīva*) acquire 'Beingness'?

Vasishta: Rama! If the "separate individual" really exists, then the Non-duality of *brahman* would be invalid. From the Absolute perspective, a separate individual does not have existence at all. The separate individual is a little vibration within *Brahman* owing to the residual effects (impressions) of past actions, like a ripple occurring within the deep placid waters of an ocean. The vibration is a thought-wave of 'me-ness' or I-consciousness (*ahaṃkāra*). I shall explain to you about the thought-wave I-consciousness with an example.

A person was lying down in the open during one night looking at the sky. Owing to the diffused lighting present, he could see the sky to some extent; but beyond that point, it was all dark. He then wondered from where the darkness came. Obviously, the darkness did not belong to the open sky (space). He saw the sky to the extent that his eyesight could extend. That means that his vision did not have the capacity to show him what was there after a limit. His eyesight had a limited capability only. So he noticed in darkness what was there beyond the capability of his eyesight. In other words, the absence of the capability of the eye appeared as 'darkness.'

Now the question is can we say that the darkness has 'beingness' or not? You cannot say that it has no beingness because you see it. But you cannot find any supporting evidence to say that it has beingness. Similarly as long as *brahman* is aware of Itself, It is Non-dual, *brahman* alone is. When that gets obstructed for some reason or other, when *Brahman* ignores Its own true nature, the thought-wave of a separate 'me' (*ahaṃkāra*) arises.

When the eyesight is unable to reach beyond a distance, the mind should say that it is unable to see any further. Why should the mind see darkness? That's what we attribute to the influence of the impressions – the residual effect of the past actions. When *Brahman* is unable to know Its own intrinsic quality, It does not admit that It doesn't know; instead It says 'me.' This is *ahaṃkāra* – I-consciousness. The reason for this is also the influence of the stored impressions.

I-consciousness or '*ahaṃkāra'*, superimposition of a 'me', and imagination of 'me-ness' -- all mean the same thing. I-consciousness is a superimposition. When another layer of superimposition takes place on it, it would be the *antaḥkaraṇa* – the ego. More layers of superimpositions generate the five fundamental elements. Another series of layers of superimpositions on *antaḥkaraṇa* result in Hiranyagarbha and Cosmic being (*virāṭ puruṣa*). Yet another type of superimposition results in the separate individual (*vyaṣṭi puruṣa*) as well as the world.

`The separate individual has originated from *Brahman. Brahman* is actionless, i.e. It has no actions to be done. But the individual has arisen because of an intention, a vibration, a thought-wave. Because of that, he consists of mind-stuff only. That is to say that he is the mind. Because 'intention' was the backdrop in which he originated, he is bound to take action. And the actions done bind him with the effects they produce. He ends up in bondage.

A question may arise here. After all, *Brahman* is the substrate from which the individual *jIva* draws his beingness; would not the actions done by the individual bind *Brahman* too? The straight answer is "No.", clarified by the following analogy.

Brahman is like a river. The individual is like the scum on the water surface. The actions are like the rope that ties the boat to the peg on the bank. The rope stays on the surface of the water. The floating scum gets blocked by the rope but the water continues to flow below the rope. The rope can arrest only the scum but not the water. Likewise, the actions of the individual bind the scum-like individual but not the water-like *brahman*.

The individual gets stuck in the cycle of births and deaths because of the effects of his actions (*karma*). The *ahaṃkāra* contributes to the beingness of the individual who had otherwise no beingness and karma contributes to his beingness through births.

In sum, Rama, the life cycle of an individual comes into existence as a result of mentation only. It is clear from this that he does not have beingness in an absolute sense. Therefore, the non-duality of *brahman* is not affected.

Rama: Sir! You say that the individual is made up of mind-stuff.

मनस्त्वयोग्यो जीवोऽयं को भवेत्परमात्मनः ।
कथं वास्मिन्समुत्पन्नः को वायं वद मे पुनः ।।

manastvayogyo jīvo'yaṃ ko bhavetparamātmanaḥ |
kathaṃ vāsminsamutpannaḥ ko vāyaṃ vada me punaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 67, Sloka 1

What is the relation between him and the Supreme Self ? Is he a part of the Supreme Self or he is the result of an action arising in *Brahman*? Kindly explain to me again.

Vasishta: I already said that the individual did not have beingness. Why do you raise this question again?

Rama: The separate individual does not have beingness from the Absolute perspective. But he exists from an empirical viewpoint. My question is from an empirical point of view only.

Let us say that an individual is born and his birth is like that of yogurt from milk by the process of transformation (*pariṇāma*). If that happens to be the case, after the individual is born, the Supreme Self should disappear. But it is not so.

Or suppose that the birth of the individual is a changeless change (*vivarta*) like the projection of a snake on a rope. That would mean that he is illusory (*mithya*) and he should disappear like the snake would after the attainment of Self-Knowledge. But we see *jīvanmukta*-s (liberated individuals) like Leela in our story very much alive. So this is also not possible.

Or if it is said that an individual is not born at all, what for would the world exist? After all, the world is an experienceable thing which comes into existence when there is an experiencer. In the absence of an experiencer, there is no reason for a world which is experienceable to exist.

None of the above views are valid. Hence my question.

[**Note:** Sage Vasishta could see that Rama was mixing up the Absolute and the transactional viewpoints in his analysis. In order to clarify the matters, the Sage decided to explain to Rama how the system of bondage and liberation worked within the empirical illusory world. He thought of illustrating the concepts involved through the Story of the Needle (*sūcika upakhyāna*). As a curtain raiser to the story, he spoke in the 67th *sarga* (canto) about *māyā*.]

67. Illusion, its Effects and Liberation

Vasishta:

समस्तशक्तिखचितं ब्रह्म सर्वेश्वरं सदा ।
यथैव शक्त्या स्फुरति प्राप्तां तामेव पश्यति ।।

samastaśaktikhacitaṃ brahma sarveśvaraṃ sadā |
yayaiva śaktyā sphurati prāptāṃ tāmeva paśyati ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 67, Sloka 2

There is power in *Brahman*. That power is in fact not different from *Brahman*. Yet it becomes the source for many other powers in *Brahman*. As a result, He becomes the Lord of all things. That power is '*māyā*.'

With the help of the power *māyā*, He imagines Himself to be differentiated. In one form, He appears as a finite individual. In another He appears as Iswara, the Supreme Lord. This split in *brahman* is causal for the origination of the world. The finite individual eventually gets entangled in the cycle of births and deaths under the influence of his desires and tendencies (*vāsana*-s) from past actions. That, in brief, sums up the relationship between the finite individual and *brahman*.

Rama: Sir! You say that the actions (*karma*) and tendencies (*samskāra*) of the individual are the cause for the evolution of the world. What exactly do the terms action, destiny and cause indicate?

Vasishta:

1. māyā has three qualities (guṇa-s) in it. When Consciousness is associated with rajoguNa (action oriented quality), It vibrates. When Consciousness takes the form of mind, it is described as a *spanda* or throb. When Consciousness takes the form of a percept, it is called a *spanda* or a non-vibratory.

2. When there is throbbing, Consciousness proceeds towards the process of creation (sriṣṭi). When It is non-vibratory, it moves towards dissolution (*pralaya*). Because it is the throbbing Consciousness only that proceeds towards creation, Consciousness itself is the destiny (daiva), action (karma) and causation (kāraṇa) that are at the root of creation.

3. When Consciousness takes the form of life-force (*prāna*), and the life-force moves, it is called the 'cause.'

4. When Consciousness takes the form of the body and the organs and there is a movement in them, it is called 'action.'

5. When the action matures to yield its fruits, it is called the 'destiny.'

6. Therefore, the throbbing in Consciousness is at the back of destiny, action and causation.

7. The finite individuals are born again and again because of the throbbing in Consciousness. In the course of these cycles, sometimes they travel on the path recommended by the scriptures and go towards liberation. Some of them attain liberation after a few cycles of birth.

8. Consciousness takes the form of and shines through the adjunct (*upādhi*) it wears. Hence, the difference in appearance is in the adjunct, and not in Consciousness.

9. The non-existing difference manifests as the 'you-me' differentiation. The reason for it is ignorance with regard to the knowledge of who you truly are. The reason for the ignorance is the desire to experience pleasure. The reason for the desire to experience pleasure is due to the stored impressions.

I shall expound the above issues in greater detail in the Story of King Lavana.
Listen to the fascinating play of *māyā* in the world.

When Consciousness reflects in *māyā*, the reflected image produces the finite individual.
When Consciousness enters the thought wave, it becomes the mind.

When Consciousness enters the decision making faculty, it becomes the intellect.

When Consciousness enters the faculty of remembrance, it becomes the memory.

When Consciousness enters the faculty of me-ness, it becomes I-consciousness. Know now how fantasizing a world goes on.

When the outer world is perceived through the senses, it is 'awake world' (*jāgrit*).

When a world appears without the aid of senses but with a feeling of a 'me' being present inside, it is 'dream world' (*swapna*).

When everything folds up and only the impressions (*vāsana*) remain in the mind, it is deep sleep (*suṣupti*).

Transcending the above three states lies the Fourth (*turīya*).

When the sense of separate 'me' dissolves in *brahman*, it is sometimes referred to as *turīyātīta*.

Rama! Because you have asked for definitions, I have given a mouthful of them. However, I would like to tell you one more thing. A question is often raised about how *brahman* could be causal for the genesis of the world as *brahman* is unattached (*asanga*). My answer would be that *brahman* is as much causal for the world as space is causal for the growth of a tree.

Space does not obstruct the birth and growth of a tree. Therefore, it is causal for the tree. Similarly, *brahman* does not block the creation that takes place because of the action of *māyā*. Therefore, *Brahman* is causal for the creation of the world. Just as much a reflection is in the mirror, so much is this world within *Brahman*. The only difference is that the world blossoms out gradually like a plant growing out of the seed.

Rama: Teacher! All of it sounds quite reasonable. If the world emerged because of a vibration within Consciousness, all such vibrations would attenuate at the time of dissolution and Consciousness should have become stable. Instead of remaining placid like that, why would it start creation all over again?

Vasishta: Rama! We already said that trying to find answers to such questions is a futile job. Consciousness does not stay tranquil and quiet. It just appears to be so. The impressions of the individuals lay subdued at that time. Therefore, a world generates out of it again. Such is its nature. You see, the dried up lands in summer with not a blade of grass, turn green with new shoots with the first rainfall. It happens the same way with Consciousness too.

Rama: Revered Teacher! It is all so wonderful. I experience a sense of happiness.

यथाऽसौ याति वैपुल्यं यथा भवति चात्मभूः ।
यथा स्वभावसिद्धार्थात्तथा कथय मे प्रभो ।।

yathā'sau yāti vaipulyaṃ yathā bhavati cātmabhūḥ |
yathā svabhāvasiddhārthāttathā kathaya me prabho ||

Utpatti Praskarana, Sarga 67, Sloka 39

Please explicate to me how the one Consciousness became the Composite Consciousness as well as individual consciousness.

Vasishta: Rama! We had already discussed the process of creation. We saw that it was all merely a series of superimpositions made on Consciousness.

Rama: It is all very well, Teacher! But the point I am unable to wrap my head around is this: The entire created world is a fabrication of thought, ignorance can never touch *brahman*, and the finite individual and *brahman* are one only. Why then should anyone try for liberation at all ? What for is Self-inquiry?

Vasishta: You are jumping the line with your question, Rama. We have not yet explored the theory yet.

What you say is true from the Absolute perspective. But the fact is you are right now in the worldly stage only. Your outlook is empirical. There is a world you interact with. You still have ignorance. Therefore, you are in bondage. And hence there is a need for you to inquire into your true Self. You have to attain liberation. This is the fact of life in the present.

From the absolute perspective, Hiranyagarbha, the Creator is an individual; so also is the lowest of the worms, an individual. But notice the disparity between them from the transactional perspective ! You should not mix up these different levels of view in your understanding. I shall narrate the Story of Sucika to bring home the point.

68. Story of Sucika, The Needle-shaped Demon

Vasishta: Once upon a time, there lived a lady demon by name '*Karkati*' to the north of the Himalaya Mountains. Karkati means cruel. Her nickname was '*Vishucika*', which means the cholera disease. She was very huge in size and weight and resembled a black hill. She was always hungry and her appetite was never satiated in spite of devouring plenty of animals.

Unable to appease her hunger, she desired to acquire extraordinary powers so that she could eat every creature on the earth. So she began to observe austerities and intense meditation. After about a thousand years, God Brahma appeared before her and inquired the reason for her austerities. Karkati was so excited on seeing Brahma that she was utterly confused and did not know how to express what she wanted. She was also apprehensive that God may disappear if she were to delay her request to the Lord for too long. In her muddled thinking and nervousness, she said to Brahma as follows:

Sucika: My Lord ! Please grant me a boon so that befitting my name of *Vishuci*, I get the form of that disease. Because the word Vishuci also means a needle, please bless me to assume the size of a needle. By the virtue of your boon, on taking the form of the decease Vishuchi and the shape of the needle, I will suck the blood of all creatures and be satiated.

Brahma granted her what she wished. He further told her as follows: "My Dear! It is okay to some extent if you eat the evil doers. But you may not be able to stop yourself with that and may attack noble people too. So in order to prevent you from doing that, I prepared a mantra. Do not trouble the people who recite this holy mantra. With that caution, Brahma revealed the mantra to her and disappeared.

Suddenly the massive demon began to shrink. She shrank to the size of a large tree, then to the size of an elephant, then to the size of a man, a dwarf and then finally she became as thin and small as a needle. Remember, every one of these shapes were the result of her thoughts only. She had the appearance of a steel needle but for the absence of steel. All of it was nothing but her imagination. Though she obtained the shape with a lot of hope, she started feeling handicapped with that body. The needle had no mouth. It had no stomach either. But she was left with an enormous hunger and desire to eat, eat and eat, because both appetite and desire depend on the mind. It was an impossible situation for the demon. She was hungry but couldn't eat anything. Having no other choice, she had to be content with piercing the bodies of the human beings and entering them in the form of the disease. Her hunger, however, was not appeased.

Unless the people were evil minded, the cholera-like *viṣūci* disease would not affect them. So the demon first used to instigate the people to be malicious and then infect them. In some places doctors and quacks could resist her attempts. She fled from such situations. She was careful to select filthy places so that she could be sure of her success.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki utilized this opportunity in the story to describe all such locations where infections could prevail. His list included:

1. Body organs diseased from debauchery, 2. Unclean body parts, 3. Anaemic bodies, 4. Fallen hair, 5. Dead bodies, 6. Withered bodies, 7. Places stinking with rotten smells, 8. Poisonous plants, 9. Places with scattered bones, 10. Fast windy places, 11. Houses of ignorant people, 12. Dirty clothes, 13. People who wear dirty clothes and their houses, 14. Burrows in the trees, 15. Cut out branches, 16. Honey combs, 17. Nests of birds, 18. Hot winds, 19. Cold places, 20. Lepers, 21. Places where the disabled live, 22. Snake pits, 23. Marshy places, 24. Habitats of wild animals like tigers, bears, and pythons, 25. Forests, 26. Haunted places, 27. Water sheds with rotten leaves, 28. Drainage canals, 29. Crowded places, 30. Monkeys that eat lice, 31. Brittle nails.

The Sage compared the activities of the demon to that of a needle. He could apply imaginatively all the work a needle normally does, to the demon. He described in beautiful poetry comparing the behaviour of evil people with those of the demon and the needle.]

69. The Second Meditation of Sucika

Equipped with the two body forms – the gross form known as Loha Sucika and the subtle form known as *jiva ṣucika* – the demon troubled humanity for thousands of years. All infectious places (like those in the list above) were the favourite haunting grounds for the demon Vishucika. Yet, she remained unhappy as her hunger remained unappeased. A day came when she regretted her actions. She thought like this: "I made a grave mistake. I lost my beautiful huge body. In the form of a needle, now, I am unable to eat anything. I do not have any relatives or friends. I cannot even die. I observed the austerities and meditation like a fool without much of a thought. It was like performing a sacred ritual but ending up with a poltergeist as the reward. I hope I can get back my huge belly so that I can eat and drink potfuls of blood."

Thus the demon went on bemoaning every day. Her sorrow increased day by day. Finally she decided to get her original form by observing another round of austerities and meditation.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki, a great poet that he was, wrote very entertainingly mixing humor with poetry to describe Karkati's plight in this *sarga.*]

The demon went back to the Himalayan Mountains after merging her physical, needle body and subtle, cholera-like, body into one. She chose an unclean place and began meditation. The trees and the birds in the forest were amazed by Karkataki's strong resolve. They provided her with pleasant breeze, sweet fruits, nutritious nuts and healthy pollen. But she was not tempted by any of these and continued her meditation resolutely.

The Lord of the gods, Indra, sent tasty particles of meat in copious amounts in order to disturb her meditation. He tried raging forest fires, intense storms, fast whirlwinds etc. None of them could distract her. Anthills grew around her and on her. Still she was not perturbed.

However, an unexpected change occurred in her mind.

विचारयन्त्यास्तस्याः स्वमात्मा सत्यं सुचेतनम्
ज्ञानालोकः समुदभूत्सा परावरदर्शिनी

vicārayantyāstasyāḥ svamātmā satyaṃ sucetanam
jñānālokaḥ samudabhūtsā parāvaradarśinī

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 72, Sloka 24

As a result of her practices and austerities, the demon Sucika lost her huge body and acquired a new one. Not being happy with the new body, she began practices of austerities and meditation again to get back the old body. While she was intensely involved in these practices, a question flashed in her mind. She wondered if the bodies were changeable things, what were those bodies and who she was. She went on the path of Self inquiry. She could realize that the real "I" was the sentient entity and not inert like the body. She learnt to discriminate between the higher (*para*) and the lower (*apara*) order of things. Her observation of austerities cleansed her of the demerits she had. She became a pure being – from Vishuci to clean Suci, a needle. She obtained Self-Knowledge.

Even then, she continued with her meditational practices. She remained like that for over 7,000 years. The heat produced from the intensity of her practice was like a blaze. It heated up not only the Himalayan range but also the fourteen worlds.

The Lord of Gods enquired from Sage Narada the reason for such immense heat. Sage Narada recounted the history of the demon Sucika.

(Note: Sage Valmiki skilfully wove into the detailed account given by Sage Narada on how the disease Vishuci would spread, which birds and other creatures were its carriers etc)

When the demon decided to observe the austerities a second time, her body was in the form of a needle and was also combined with the disease cholera. She wondered how to reach the Himalayas in her acicular form. Finally, she chose an eagle and entered into its heart. She took control of the eagle. Obeying the thought waves of the demon, the eagle flew to a lonely place in the Himalayas. At the same time the eagle landed at a spot, a tiny iron needle appeared along with a fire from the ground at that place. The demon in the eagle jumped into the needle. The eagle flew away being relieved of the demon. The demon performed the austerities taking support of the iron needle as its external body.

Sage Valmiki, thus, described twice the sequence of above events in the life of Sucika.

Once, it was described in the words of Maharishi Vasishta as a teaching to Rama. The second time it was described in the words of Sage Narada speaking to Lord Indra. The purpose of repetition has to be understood as laying emphasis on the fact that the bodies are acquired by the individuals as an effect of their own 'thoughts and desires.' The last part of Sage Narada's narration is considered to be of particular interest by the spiritual aspirants.

Sage Narada urged Lord Indra to grant the wishes of the demon. Then Indra asked the God of Wind to find Sucika. The God of Air searched for Sucika in several worlds and could finally locate her with great difficulty. He was hesitant to approach and speak to the demon because of the divine radiance he noticed in her. He paid his respects to her silently and returned to Indra.

Indra could surmise that the God of Wind was sanctified by mere audition of Sucika.

He hugged him and asked for his views. The God of Wind said that it was beyond their capacity to grant any boon to the demon because she had reached a far superior status through her meditational practices. He suggested that only Lord Brahma was capable of granting her boons. All the gods then approached Lord Brahma who conceded to their request to grant a boon to Sucika. Lord Brahma appeared before the demon and asked her to spell out her wish. She wanted to respond. But she lacked necessary organs to communicate. So, she thought as follows in her mind:

My Lord Brahma!

पूर्णास्मि गतसंदेहा किं वरेण करोम्यहम् ।
शाम्यामि परिनिर्वामि सुखमासे च केवलम् ।।

pūrṇāsmi gatasaṃdehā kiṃ vareṇa karomyaham |
śāmyāmi parinirvāmi sukhamāse ca kevalam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 75, Sloka 3

"Now, I am complete and totally content. I have no doubts. What do I need any boons for ? I do not move or react. I am totally happy. Now I understand the only thing that needs to be understood. I am the ultimate Beingness. I am not lured by the illusory creations. Earlier I experienced misery because of my ignorance. I am free of ignorance now through Self-inquiry. I don't have likes or dislikes."

Lord Brahma could read her mind and said: "My Dear! You have to experience the worldly objects for some more time before dissolving in the Supreme Self. That is the way your destiny is. The desire with which you commenced the meditational practices will be fulfilled. You will obtain your original massive body and live in these mountains. Your earlier large body did not go anywhere. It is right in your subtle body like the huge tree being present within a small seed. Now that you have achieved Self- Knowledge, you will not trouble anyone in spite of the huge size of your body or you being a demon. You will remain in a thoughtless state (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). Whenever you come out of that state, you will perceive everything as the Supreme Self. You will satiate your hunger by righteous means. You will hurt only those that fail to observe the natural principles of justice. May you live as a liberated being!" Blessing thus, the Lord Brahma disappeared.

70. Enigmatic questions

Karkati remained calm listening to Brahma. She was neither elated nor dispirited. Her body grew back to its original gigantic size. She stayed there in deep meditation for another six months. She felt hungry but did not wish to hunt for her food by cruel means. She was wondering what to do. Observing her condition, the Lord of Wind suggested to her:

"Karkati! Teach Self-Knowledge to the ignorant people. That's what the realized individuals do. In case a person does not heed your teaching, it is obvious then that he is anyway born to destroy himself. There is nothing wrong in preying on them. That's the way to earn your rightful food."

Karkati felt relieved and happy at the words of Wind. She went in search of a suitable prey. She located a tribal Kingdom with a large tribal population, hoping to make a meal of them. But it was already late in the evening by that time and it was dark. Vikrama, the King of that tribe, was on a tour of his Kingdom at that time along with his minister. Karkati thought them to be robbers as the night had already set in. She wanted to devour them. But she wanted to make sure that they lacked Self-realization before eating them. So she challenged them and shouted warning them that she was going to kill them.

King Vikrama responded calmly to Karkataki's shouts without fear. He said: "Hey, Demon! Who are you? Where are you? Nobody is scared by your empty words. Demonstrate your strength. Please come before us and tell us what you want. We will fulfill your needs."

Karkati was pleased with the words of the King. She appeared before them in her enormous build and a rattling demonish grin. But the King and his minister were not fazed.

The minister said in a commanding voice: "O' Demon! What is this big talk? We can flick you off like the wind blows away an insect. What is important is to achieve your desire. A person should begin his action with peaceful means to accomplish his desires. So tell us what you want. None returned from us without getting their desire fulfilled."

Karkati was surprised to hear those words. She felt that the two people could be knowledgeable of Self as they were not afraid of death. She thought of getting some of her own doubts cleared through a discussion with them. However, she said aloud :

Karkati: I feel a sense of friendship on seeing you. Please tell me who you are.

Minister: His Excellency is the King of the tribes here. I am his minister. We are taking the nightly rounds in order to put an end to the menace caused by evil people like you. It is, after all, a function of the ruler to punish the wicked.

Karkati: My Dear King! Your minister appears to be very haughty. Such ministers are a blot to the image of a King. A King's reputation depends on his ministers. A King must be virtuous and so should be his ministers. As the King is, so will be his people.

Knowledge of the Self is the best of all virtues. In fact it is called the Royal Knowledge. Possessed of Self-Knowledge, a King will be able to rule with equanimity. A King or the ministers who do not have Self-Knowledge are not worthy of their positions. I do not know whether you are knowledgeable of the Self. If you are, it is good for you and your people. I want to ascertain your knowledge of self. If you are knowledgeable, I will spare your lives. Otherwise, I will eat you up.

I will ask you a few questions to check the depth of your knowledge. Think over carefully and answer me. That is all my wish is.

The King, without wasting a moment, asked her to pose the questions. Immediately Karkati shot 72 questions at the King, without a break. She cautioned the King once again to save himself and his people with proper replies.

Her first question was:

एकस्यानेकसंख्यस्य कस्याणोरम्बुधेरिव ।
अन्तर्ब्रह्माण्डलक्षाणि लीयन्ते बुद्बुदा इव ।।

ekasyānekasaṃkhyasya kasyāṇorambudheriva |
antarbrahmāṇḍalakṣāṇi līyante budbudā iva ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 79, Sloka 2

The substance is One only. But it appears as innumerable things. It is very subtle as an atom; at the same time, it is infinite as an ocean. Millions and millions of universes disappear into it like bubbles. What is it?

The seventy second question was:

एकेनेदमाततमनेकचिदेव विश्वं किंसार एवमतिवल्गसि हंसि पासि ।
किंदर्शनेन न भवस्यथवा सदैव नूनं भवस्यमलदृग्वदनः स्वशान्त्यै ।।

ekenedamātatamanekacideva viśvaṃ
kiṃsāra evamativalgasi haṃsi pāsi |
kiṃdarśanena na bhavasyathavā sadaiva
nūnaṃ bhavasyamaladṛgvadanaḥ vaśāntyai ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 79, Sloka 32

Who is responsible for creating this expansive universe comprising billions and billions of creatures? Your entire life is spent conducting transactions with some one or the other. You destroy some and protect others. What is the strength because of which you are able to carry out those things? By obtaining whose Grace are you able to live as a peaceful Witness to all and non-different from it? Reveal that secret to me if you wish to be alive.

It was not without reason that the demon Karkati threw such a rapid volley of 72 questions at the King. She knew in her heart of hearts the scriptural position that if an individual was truly knowledgeable of the Self, his knowledge would not be merely bookish. He would be, according to *śāstra*-s, very intelligent, focused, skilful, and smart.

Kathopanishad, for example, holds that one should be mature in intellect and diligent in action in order to be eligible to learn Self-Knowledge. As per this Upanishad, Lord Yama tested Naciketasa's eligibility by preaching a complicated sacrificial ritual. Naciketasa proved his competence by repeating the process of the ritual in full after hearing it only once. Lord Yama was satisfied and then taught him the Self-Knowledge.

The flurry of questions from Karkati did not perturb the King and his minister. The minister was a little impatient. So he answered the demon first.

Minister: My King need not answer your questions, since I can do that. I am happy that all the questions pertain to Self-Knowledge.

Though the questions were 72 in number, several of them are repeated by you. Some of the questions are the same but with a different wording. A few of the questions are covered within a larger question you already asked. So I shall group all questions that are similar and give you the answers. Please listen to me with care.

Your first question was:

एकस्यानेकसंख्यस्य कस्याणोरम्बुधेरिव ।
अन्तर्ब्रह्माण्डलक्षाणि लीयन्ते बुद्बुदा इव ।।

ekasyānekasaṃkhyasya kasyāṇorambudheriva |
antarbrahmāṇḍalakṣāṇi līyante budbudā iva ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 79, Sloka 2

The substance is One only. It is as subtle as an atom. We can say so because it cannot be grasped by any of the sense organs. Millions and millions of universes are born from it like bubbles in water and disappear back into it. In that aspect it resembles an infinite ocean in which the waves, bubbles and foam are born and go back into it. Hence it appears as though it has innumerable forms. The question is what is that atom-like 'thing' which forms the substratum to various projections?

You very cleverly used the words – atom and infinite. An atom can never be perceived by any sense organ, whereas the Supreme Self cannot be perceived by, not only the sense organs but also the mind. Therefore, the Supreme Self is subtler than atom. In general parlance, there is no subtler thing than an atom. So it is not wrong to compare the Supreme Self with an atom. It is also not incorrect to compare the Supreme Self with the ocean because like the waves etc. are born from the ocean, the universes are born from and dissolve back into the Supreme Self.

A question will come up then. How were the universes born from the Supreme Self ? Where and in what form were they before they were born? The answer to these questions can best be understood from the seed and the tree metaphor. Everybody knows that a tree grows out of a seed. Where was the tree before it emerged ? The answer had to be that it was in the seed. How could a big tree exist in a seed of the size of a pin head? Is it believable? If one does not believe that, from where else could the tree have arisen? So it has to be agreed that the tree was in the seed but in a very subtle form and not exactly like the tree.

That means the tree was not present in the seed in its exact physical form but it is also not that it was not in the seed. The form of the tree in the seed is 'real - unreal'. In other words, 'it is present but at the same time it appears as though not to be present'.

So it is Supreme Self, which is infinite like an ocean and is capable of appearing in different forms, that is the substratum for millions of universes, and yet is subtle like an atom. It is the seed that gives raise to the enormous tree called the world.

The above answer covers not only your first question but also what you asked in the 58th question. The question was:

अणौ जगन्ति तिष्ठन्ति कस्मिन्बीज इव द्रुमः ।

aṇau jaganti tiṣṭhanti kasminbīja iva drumaḥ |
Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 79, Sloka 21

In which seed, the giant tree of the world is hidden ?

I have already provided the answer.

The 16th question was:

सत्तायाः कः स्वभावदः sattaayaaH kaH svabhaavadaH |

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 79, Sloka 8

A common 'beingness' appears in all the things seen in the world. What is it? Where did it come from ? How did it come ?

The answer to those questions is also in a way within the former reply.

If it is asked from where the 'beingness' of the waves comes, we have to say that it comes from the ocean. Similarly, the beingness of the tree comes from the seed. So also the existence of the world and the various things contained therein has to come from its root cause – the Supreme Self only. Thus, your 1st, 58th and the 16th questions stand answered.

Continuing the incisive analysis in the above manner, the minister answered all the questions posed by Karkati by grouping similar questions and relating the answers to the Supreme Self. Karkati was surprised and felt very happy.

Noticing the reaction in Karkati, the minister wound up his reply as follows:

Minister: Karkati! All your questions were about the Ultimate Truth. I expounded fully the theoretics of the Supreme Self. You tried to confuse us by repeating your questions at one or two places. However, I provided answers to all of them. What stands out clearly from your questions is that you are constantly contemplating on the Non-dual, Pure Consciousness in you. There is no second opinion on that.

Karkati was extremely pleased to hear the above concluding remarks of the minister.

She turned to the King and expressed her appreciation of the minister's response and his sincerity and oratory skills. However, she said that she wanted to know the opinion of the King too. The King replied as follows:

King: Karkati! Your mind is completely filled with Pure Consciousness. '*turīya*' is the Fourth that transcends the awake, dream and deep sleep states while, at the same time, being those very states and yet unattached to any of them. It stays as a mere Witness. That's what Consciousness is. The mind which is filled with Consciousness drops all sorts of intentions and thoughts.

When such a mind contracts a bit, edges form dividing it into orthogonal pairs such as beingness and non-beingness; appearance and disappearance etc. That state is called Creation.

When the same mind develops fully, it will have no limiting edges and divisions within it. It is eternal. That Itself is pure Beingness. And that is *Brahman*. All your questions pertain to that *Brahman*.

My minister replied to many of your questions. The answers to the remaining ones are subsumed within those answers. However, I shall answer each of them again.

You used the word 'atom-like' several times in describing the Supreme Self in your questions. In his answer my minister said. . "The Supreme Self can be said to be 'atom-like' since it is subtler than the space, that is to say that It cannot be realized through the senses.

You agreed with what he said without much thinking. A fig seed is like a fine sand grain. Space too is very fine grained. But does it justify comparing the fig seed with space? Space is as coarse in comparison to the Supreme Self as a fig seed is in comparison to space. So it is not proper to refer to the Supreme Self as atom-like.

You may point out that the Supreme Self was referred to as an atom in the Vedas themselves in sentences like "*aṇoraṇīyān (kāṭhaka, ī-ī-20),*" "*eṣaḥ aṇu ātmā (muṇḍaka, īī-i-9)*" etc. But the fact is that Vedas do not compare the Supreme Self with the atom. What the Vedas declare is that the Supreme Self "appears" finer than an atom owing to *māyā*. So the context in which the Vedas use the word 'atom-like' is very different from the way you were using it. It is not proper at all to compare the Supreme Self with an atom.

Since you used that comparison, my minister perhaps did not want to contradict you and offered an explanation in the way he did. As a matter of fact, the Supreme Self can be said to be neither gross nor subtle."

The King went on, thus, explaining to Karkati his answers from a different angle. Finally he took up her 72nd question. He said that there were two parts in it.

The first part was:

केनेदमाततमनेकचिदेव विश्वं किंसार एवमतिवल्गसि हंसि पासि ।

kenedamātatamanekacideva viśvaṃ
kiṃsāra evamativalgasi haṃsi pāsi |

Who is responsible for creating this expansive universe comprising billions and billions of creatures? Your entire life is spent conducting transactions with some one or the other. You destroy some and protect others. What is your strength to carry out those things?

The second part was:

किंदर्शनेन न भवस्यथवा सदैव नूनं भवस्यमलदृग्वदनः स्वशान्त्यै ।।

kiṃdarśanena na bhavasyathavā sadaiva
nūnaṃ bhavasyamaladṛgvadanaḥ vaśāntyai ||

By obtaining whose Grace are you able to live as a peaceful Witness to all and non-different from It ? Reveal that secret to me if you wish to stay alive.

King:

द्वैतेन सुन्दरतरं स्वमनुज्झितेन रूपं सुषुप्तसदृशेन यथावबोधात् ।
ऐक्यं गतं स्थितिगमागममुक्तमेव मित्थं स्थितं तनु जगत्परमार्थपिण्डः ।।

dvaitena sundarataraṃ svamanujjhitena
rūpaṃ suṣuptasadṛśena yathāvabodhāt |
aikyaṃ gataṃ sthitigamāgamamuktameva
mitthaṃ sthitaṃ tanu jagatparamārthapiṇḍaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 81, Sloka 107

[**Note:** This is a very profound verse with a deep meaning.]

avabodhāt – yathā – aikyam – gatam – sundarataram – sthiti gamāgama muktam – svam – anujjhitena – suṣupti sadruśena – dvaitena – evam ittham – sthitam – tanu + jagat – paramārtha pindaḥ

The King said: I notice duality. A world of multiplicity is visible. But the duality, however, does not exist independent of my 'True Self.' The nature of my 'True Self' is: non-dual; blissful; devoid of origination, sustenance and dissolution. Even after I wake up from sleep, the world appears as though I see it in sleep. Because the dualistic world appears thus to me, I consider it to be a precipitate of the Supreme Self.

By implication, the King conveyed that the Grace obtained by him was that he was himself the Non-dual *brahman* alone. Karkati was overjoyed listening to the King's affirmation of the essence of Reality. She addressed the King as follows:

Karkati: My dear King! Both you and your minister are holy. Your intelligence is shining brilliantly like the Sun. The dark worldly bondage desiccates in your company. You are worthy of adoration. I want to bless you by granting you boons. Please ask for your wish.

71. The Divine Demon

King: (Immediately responding to Karkati): Karkati! An epidemic of the cholera disease (*viṣūcika*) is widely spread now in my Kingdom. Many people are facing death because of it. I have been in search of a virtuous person who can give us a remedial measure for the disease. Now, I found you – the very personification of that infection. You kill and devour people who are wrong doers and sinners. It is my responsibility to see that persons like you are under control. Now that we met, promise me that you will not harm anyone.

Karkati: (Spontaneously): May your wish be fulfilled!

The king was surprised that the demon was not angry for what he desired. He said :

King: Demon Karkati! You have been accustomed to eating flesh and drinking blood for so many years. If you suddenly start observing non- violence from now on as promised, it may be difficult for you to eke out a living. How will you manage?

Karkati: My dear King! I have been in deep meditation for the past six months. I have just come out of my meditation because I felt hungry. The hunger was propelled by the impressions from my past actions. I did not have adequate stored merit that the pangs of hunger could be curbed. But I am blessed to meet noble people like you. I want to forget my hunger and get back to my meditation. I hope one day in that meditative state I will leave the body. I will, however, never ever harm others. It looks to me that you recognized me using your clairvoyance as the in-charge for the cholera epidemic. Let me introduce myself and tell you about my story. My name is Karkati.

Thus, Karkati narrated her entire story. She concluded by offering to teach them the mantra which she learnt from Brahma as that mantra would be the antidote to the epidemic. All the three then proceeded to the bank of a river for a holy dip and ablutions before being initiated into the mantra. After the ceremony, Karkati wanted to take leave. The King said:

King: Mother! Now you are not only a friend of ours but also our Guru because you initiated us into the mantra. So please accept our hospitality and be our guest for a few days. I request you to change your form into an elderly housewife and visit our house.

Karkati: (After a big laugh): When I change into a pious lady, people may feed me rice and bread. But my real form will stay inside as it is. It craves meat and blood and not rice. I was born as a demon. I will die as a demon. I may have attained Self-Knowledge, but the original nature of my body will not change. I shall remain a demon for the rest of my life and eat like a demon only. If my food is not available, I may starve. Rice and bread are not good for me.

King: (After reflecting over the matter): Mother! What you say is true. After Self-realization, the undesirable impressions in one's mind will dissolve and new virtuous intentions will arise. But the quality and habits of the body will not change. A short man will not turn out to be a tall person nor will a meat eater become a rice eater because of Self-Knowledge. So you will need meat even after knowing *brahman*. In spite of what he/she eats, a Knower of *Brahman* is worthy of worship. So we will have you as our guest. I suggest a plan so that you will get the food of your liking. Please stay at my house for a few days as a pious lady. In the meanwhile, I shall gather all the criminals who are awarded a death sentence in my Kingdom for their evil actions. You may take them to your habitat and eat them there. By that way, the punishment given to them will be fulfilled and your hunger will be appeased. After your hunger is satisfied, you may take up your meditation. As and when you feel hungry again, please come back to us. I shall keep all those criminals who are to be hanged for your meal. It is not a sin to eat such people. You will also get human flesh as your food. As the evil doers become your food, that will do some good to them too instead of just being sent to the gallows. Let us thus maintain our friendship.

Vasishta: (Continuing): Karkati agreed to the proposal of the King. Transforming herself into a beautiful lady with auspicious attire and ornaments, Karkati stayed for six days in the palace of the King. The King and the minister collected about 3,000 criminals on the death row. Looking at the potential food, the demon got back into her original shape. She resembled a huge mountain in size. She grabbed the 3000 people with both hands and carried them to her cave. She chewed and devoured them in no time. After such a sumptuous meal, she felt sleepy. She slept for three days. When she woke up, she completed her ablutions and sat for deep meditation. She was in *samādhi* for six years. She then returned to the tribal Kingdom for food. She satiated her hunger eating the criminals sentenced to gallows.

The friendship between the tribal Kingdom and Karkati went on thus for a long long time.

72. Adoring the Knowers of *brahman*

The inhabitants of the Kingdom noticed marked changes that were auspicious and beneficial to all ever since Karkati's visits to their Kingdom began. Some of the things that were noted by all were:

1. Whenever Karkati was in town, the people were free of troubles arising from devils and witches.

2. The people blessed by Karkati obtained redemption from their illnesses.

3. Virtuous individuals were being born in the families of the offenders whom Karkati devoured because they attained higher worlds by becoming her food.

4. Natural disasters disappeared in the Kingdoms that Karkati happened to visit. Because of these salutary experiences, Karkati's fame spread to neighbouring Kingdoms.

The Kings from those lands also offered their criminals to her. But her appetite slowly reduced and the periods spent on meditation increased. Consequently, the frequency of her visits to the various Kingdoms came down. But with her visits decreasing, natural calamities, diseases, famine conditions etc. became rampant again.

So whenever her visit to their Kingdom was delayed, the people themselves went to her cave, where she was in meditation. They worshipped her at the cave. With those devotional practices, the misery of the people was alleviated. The practice of worshiping her at the cave came to be known as '*kandarā* worship.' ('*kandarā*' means cave).

In course of time people began to worship her idol at their own houses. Worshiping her idol also was found to be yielding beneficial results to them. Her name was changed from Karkataki to Goddess Kandara. Debates and discussions took place on the meaning and significance of the word '*kandarā*.'

Some Pundits interpreted it to mean as

kaṃ dārayati iti kandarā (The Goddess who rips apart the heads of criminals).

Yet others called her Mangala Devi (Goddess of Auspiciousness). She punished the wicked and because punishment is inauspicious, she was called as Amangala Devi. Soon the word spread around that in whatever village the Goddess was not worshiped, the people of that village faced a lot of misery. So temples to Goddess *kandarā* were established in all the villages. Surprisingly, prosperity smiled on those villages where her worship increased.

Vasishta: (Continuing his discourse after completing Karkati's story): Rama! It is not a story concocted by me. The idols of Karkati are present to this day in that tribal Kingdom. Karkati, who attained Self-Knowledge, became the Village Deity for those tribals. It's no surprise one's desires get fulfilled by worshiping a Knower of *Brahman*. A Knower of *Brahman* is *Brahman*. Whether done knowingly or unknowingly, worshiping the knowers of *brahman* yields beneficial results. I narrated to you in detail the story of Karkati in the context of your question of how the world got the form it has.

[**Note:** At the end of Leela's story, there was a prolonged discussion between Rama and Sage Vasishta. Finally Rama asked the Sage: "Sir! Why should anyone strive for liberation when all that is seen is only a fabrication (kalpana); *brahman* does not have any association with ignorance; and the finite individual and *brahman* are one and same? What was self-enquiry?" As a reply to the question, Sage Vasishta recounted the story of Sucika. The salient take home message of the story was that the system of bondage and liberation was merely an imagination. The Sage emphasized the same point once again.

How could Karkati obtain the form of a needle in the story? How could she get back her mammoth shape? Were these forms different from Karkati or not? It was not that the forms were different from her nor that she was the forms. It was her intention that has changed into these shapes. Similarly, the Sage said that it was the desires of the finite individuals that shape the world. The three periods of times (past-present-future), the three worlds (heaven- earth-hell) etc. originate in the same way.

The waves in the ocean are neither different nor non-different from the ocean. So also, all these worlds are neither different nor non-different from *brahman*.]

73. Birth and Death are Imaginations

Rama: Maharshi! If these worlds are neither different nor non-different, how could we see them so vividly? How do so many varieties of actions take place here?

Vasishta: Please listen**.**

अज्वलन्नेव काष्ठेषु वह्निरर्थक्रियां यथा ।
करोति मर्कटादीनां शीतापहरणादिकम् ।।

ajvalanneva kāṣṭheṣu vahnirarthakriyāṃ yathā |
karoti markaṭādīnāṃ śītāpaharaṇādikam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 84, Sloka 8

Monkeys feel relieved from the cold by (hugging tightly) a log of wood even though the fire in the wood is not lit. In the same way, all actions take place within this non-existent creation.

Rama! Remember what you studied about monkeys. Monkeys hug tightly the branches of certain trees, when they feel very cold. They have a strong belief that there is heat in those branches because they saw the creation of fire when the branches rubbed against each other. Because of their strong belief, they feel as if they had really experienced the warmth. How does it happen?

The moral of the story is that it is not important for a thing to be really existent. What is important is the firmness of conception. If a thing is firmly conceived to be present, its presence can definitely be experienced. Expressing the same in technical words, it can be said that 'The existence of a thing means our belief in its existence.' Similarly, it can also be said that 'the disappearance of a thing is the annihilation of the belief of its existence.'

Let me cite a few more examples in this regard. A craftsman carved a figure on a piece of wood. In his opinion, it is an invaluable piece of art. A thief in the night searched in that house for objects of value and discarded the wooden piece as worthless. For the thief, it was just a wooden plank. A monkey feeling cold clung to that wooden piece and experienced warmth. The monkey found heat in it. A tribal woman looking for fuel wood found that piece to be a good log of wood and put it in her oven. From her perspective, it was only firewood.

What is the real thing that actually existed there? Is it a wooden plank, or fire or firewood or a piece of art ? How can we refute any one's experience ? So it is not possible to make any definitive statement about anything in this world. Therefore, we have to admit that the 'beingness' of an object is simply a 'conception' of its being present.

Consider another example. Suppose you plant a seed in the soil. The soil remains the same. But a tree grows. First comes out a shoot. Then a stem. Later leaves, more leaves and branches, flowers and finally fruits develop. Now follow carefully. A shoot grew out of the seed. So the seed and the shoot have to be the same. From the shoot grew leaves, more leaves, stem and branches. So the seed, shoot, leaves, stem and branches should be one and the same. This sort of analysis finally tells us that seed and fruit are one and the same. All this is quite logical. Now what is the fruit? It is the seed. What is it that we call the stem? It is the seed. That means the same seed is called a stem at one time and as fruit at another time.

Do we really see the seed when we refer to the stem, branch, fruit and so on? No. We have a firm belief that there cannot be a tree without a seed. So without even seeing the seed, we conceive the stem, branches, flowers and fruits over the seed. How does this take place ? It is all due to our imagination only. Therefore, Rama, the entire world comes into existence based on the strength of the imagination of a Seer. It performs or appears to perform certain actions likewise. How does this happen?

On a plank of wood one has superimposed the thought of an exquisite piece of art, another creature imagined fire and someone else saw it as firewood. In the case of the tree, one superimposed over a seed a shoot at one time, leaves at another time, stem and branches yet at another time, fruits and flowers at a later time. It is just in the same way, we superimpose the world on Pure Consciousness.

Just as things are created on the strength of 'conception,' things disappear with the end of conceptualization. The world too dissolves the moment we stop superimposing it. When the world arises, it appears to be different from its substrate *brahman*. Doesn't the monkey see fire where the wooden log is ? The appearance of the world is just like that.

If you take a moment to weigh the things and assess properly, you will not find the difference forever. That is why we say that the world is different and non- different.

What we described as taking a moment and assessing properly is called Self-inquiry. Rama, if you apply the tools that I teach you and examine things with a critical eye, you will fortify your inquiry and discover the substrate *brahman* at the root of all.

I told you the life-story of Karkati in order to establish the true nature of the world.

Rama: Revered Teacher!

तस्मा॒द्वा एत॒स्मा॑दा॒त्मन॑ आका॒शः सम्भू॑तः ।

tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ |

Tattariya Upanishad II-i-1

The world is born as space etc. from the Supreme Self

यतो॒ वा इ॒मानि॒ भूतानि॒ जायन्ते । *yatovā imānibhūtāni jāyante* |

Taittariya Upanishad III-i-1

From which all these beings are born, it is *brahman*

We have many such statements from the Vedas. All of them use the ablative case (*pancamī vibhakti*) indicative of agency. You also say 'that the world is born from Pure Consciousness.' When it is said that a pot has come from a lump of clay, how can both of them be one? Similarly, how can the Pure Consciousness and the visible world be one?

Vasishta: Rama! That is a limitation of the language. We believe for day-to-day transactional purposes a lump of clay is different from a pot. We teach the next step proceeding from this initial understanding. That is the reason why the scriptures used the ablative case. In other words, the Vedic sentences are framed based on worldly concepts. I also did the same. Once the subject is completely grasped, this confusion will not exist. That is why the elders say:

ज्ञाते द्वैतं न विद्यते । *jñāte dvaitaṃ na vidyate* |

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 84, Sloka 25

Once the Knowledge dawns, there will be no duality.

One sees duality before knowing the Truth. Therefore, all teaching has to necessarily begin based on that concept. There is no other alternative. So keep the grammar aside. Capture the essence of the quotes from the scriptures. Absorb what I teach also in the same spirit. What I wish to convey to you is that the entire world is only a creation of the mind. I told you the story of Karkati to drive home the same idea. Experts on *śāstra*-s offer very intricate definitions for the words 'bondage' (*saṃsāra*) and 'liberation' (*mokśa*). I shall sum up the entire thing in one sentence.

चित्तमेव हि संसारो रागादिक्लेशदूषितम् । तदैव तैर्विनिर्मुक्तं भवान्त इति कथ्यते ।।

cittameva hi saṃsāro rāgādikleśadūṣitam |
tadaiva tairvinirmuktaṃ bhavānta iti kathyate ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 84, Sloka 36

A mind afflicted by likes and dislikes is bondage; being free of them is liberation. For you to understand the nature of the mind clearly, I shall tell you the beautiful story of Aindava (*īndavopakhyāna*).

74. Review of the story of Karkati

[**Note:** Before taking up the next story, let us briefly review the story of Karkati and the important message conveyed through that story.]

The story of Leela preceded that of Karkati. Leela's story illustrated the fact that space, time as well as perception were non-existent. An in-depth discussion followed that story. The discussion was centered on a question raised by Rama. The question was that when all the three, viz., space, time and whatever is perceived, do not exist, where was the need for anyone to strive for liberation. A corollary question emerging from that was because of what a huge world was visible where there was nothing.

The two questions belong to two different domains. The first one about why one should strive for liberation arose from an absolute perspective and the second one about the appearance of a world where there's nothing from an empirical perspective. Sage Vasishta answered the questions correspondingly from the absolute and empirical perspectives.

Yet, the discussion did not come to a conclusion. Rama was posing essentially the same question again and again using different words. It was so because Rama was getting confused, unable to distinguish the absolute point of view from that of the worldly viewpoint. As a result, none of the replies by the Sage could prove satisfactory to Rama. Sage Vasishta understood Rama's problem. He decided to deal with the two perspectives separately. He thought of explaining first the issue of bondage and liberation which arise only in the transactional (worldly) point of view. He devoted an entire canto (the 67th in this chapter) to expound the concept of *māyā* in this context.

What the Sage desired to impress on Rama was that it was a mere fantasy if a world appeared to be present where there was nothing. The reason for such an appearance to arise was the impressions stored from past experiences. No point of origin could be located for the beginning of the formation of the impressions. But there is an end point. The end point is liberation. That's the way liberation and bondage work from the worldly perspective.

In contrast to it is the absolute perspective. Viewed from this position, *Brahman* would never have ignorance. There is no finite individual. There is no percept. Obviously then, the question of liberation would not arise. So there is no strife for liberation. Both views have to be understood from their respective positions only. The story of Sucika illustrates this point.

In the story of Sucika, a demon turned to be a realized being. The reason for her transformation was that she obtained two different bodies within one life. Obtaining two distinct bodies within one life made her realize that she was different from the body. Eventually, she achieved Self-realization on her own through the process of Self- inquiry. Her demonic body, however, remained as it was. With it, her voracious hunger persisted; but she had no intention to harm any creature. Sage Vasishta established with this story that even after the realization of Oneness, the body and its nature would continue as long as the current suffrage (*prārabdha*) lasted. But the mind would be transformed. Thus, it was shown here that Self-realization from an absolute point of view and possession of a worldly body from a transactional point of view could run parallel without mutual contradiction.

We should not overlook the fact that the story of Karkati was taken up to impress on us that Self-inquiry would be fruitful only if the absolute perspective and the empirical perspective were not mixed up. However, the Sage used the opportunity to teach a few additional points which had been cleverly interwoven into the story. The additional points are:

- Non-meritorious people with even evil qualities are eligible to attain Self-Knowledge.
- Self-Knowledge cannot be achieved by granting boons.
- Redemption from the effects of performing evil acts, sins etc. can be obtained only through penance and observation of austerities.
- The first step required in taking up a course in Advaita Vedanta is the experiential feel that "I am not the body."
- After obtaining detachment from the body, Self-inquiry is the only way to achieve Self-Knowledge.
- A Knower of Brahman is worthy of adoration even if he/she belonged to the lowest caste and creed.
- Worshipping a Knower of brahman will yield auspicious results to the worshiper independent of the intentions of the Knower of brahman. The reason has not been directly stated in the text.

However, two reasons can be inferred:

i) A Knower of *brahman* is the embodiment of all celestial forces.

So the worship done to him will reach the concerned celestial force and yield the resultant effects.

ii) The Scripture declares that the residual merit of the Knower of *brahman* will go to his worshiper and the residual demerit will accrue to the abuser.

Sage Vasishta probably described the worship of Kandara in the story for these two reasons.

1. The story is an example to show how the noble village deities evolved.
2. The story also reflects how Pundits embellish things by reinterpreting things and ascribing new meanings within a cultural milieu.
3. The scientific approach adopted by the ancient people can be appreciated from the way potential places of infection were identified and listed.

However, surpassing all the points above, there is a profound philosophical truth that Maharshi Vasishta highlighted through the story of Sucika. It is wrapped up in the description of the way Karkati changed her body. He indicated that the change happened because of the firm resolve in the mind.

The Sage tells us that it is the mind that is creating all these bodies. By extending the logic further, it can be said that the entire world itself is the creation of the mind. It is precisely in order to establish this point, Maharishi Vasishta began the 'story of Aindava.'

In summary, with the story of Leela, it is established that space, time and appearances (percepts) do not exist; they were all merely illusory entities. In the ensuing discussion, the question on how the non-existent things could be seen is answered. Fantasy propelled by the impressions from past experiences is said to be the reason. The impressions are resident in the mind. Or technically speaking, the mind is nothing but the cluster of stored impressions. The impressions engender imagination. The imagination in turn creates the illusory world. That, in short, is the sequence by which the world originates. The purpose of the next story is to clearly explicate this process.]

75. Story of Aindava

Vasishta: Rama! I once asked my father Brahma, the Creator, about how the creation took place. In response to my query, he told me a strange story.

Brahma: My son, Vasishta! Sometime ago, one-day time was completed in my life was completed and the night had begun. My night time, as you know, means the entire world was dissolved. I only remained. I had a good sleep. After a while, I felt it was a day break. I woke up. As habituated, I wanted to begin creation. When I opened my eyes and looked around, I could find nothing. There was neither illumination nor darkness. Was it a void? Perhaps !

I could not resist my urge to create though I did not have any tools or material for creation. As I continued to brood over it, something like an unmanifest space appeared. I saw some universes within that space. With surprise I looked around for the creator of those universes. I found not one but ten Brahmas. Each of them was seated on a lotus. Each of them had a royal swan as his carrier. Each one had four faces. In short, every one of them appeared to be an exact replica of myself. My astonishment knew no bounds.

So I looked deeper.

I discovered Vishnu, the ruler of those universes. I saw many creatures in those worlds. Rivers, seas, suns, appeared in them. I saw human beings with gods above them and demons below. Some of them indulged themselves in worldly pleasures. Some were desirous of liberation. Day and night appeared intertwined. Thus I saw many wonders in those worlds.I did not understand anything. I felt totally lost. I could not make out what those worlds were or how they were created. I did not know whom to ask or what to do. I wandered around those worlds like a lone mad man.

Vasishta! Have you noticed an important point? What began the search in that world was my mind. It is me now myself searching around in those worlds. I don't know how I went there or when.

After a while, I found a Sun. He seemed to be a bit free. So I mustered enough courage to approach him. In all humility I asked him who he was, how he was born and how the worlds were created.

The Sun stared at me for a while in astonishment. He then bowed to me as if he recognized me to be one whom he knew for a long time. He said to me as follows:

Sun: My Lord Brahma ! You are the creator. You ask me to tell you as though you do not know about the creation. If you ask just for inciting me to speak, here's my answer.

Sir, there was a place called "*ṣuvarnajata*" in the Jambu island in one of the universes that you created previously. Highly pious and saintly people lived there. A Brahmin called 'Indu' was one of them. He did not have any progeny. So he went to the Kailasha mountain range along with his wife and worshiped God Shiva. They observed various austerities not for a year or two but for two epochs (*yuga*-s).

Lord Shiva was pleased with the couple. He manifested before them and asked what they wanted. Indu wished for ten well accomplished sons. Lord Shiva granted the boon. Indu later had ten sons. They learned all the scriptures by the time they were seven years of age.

Their parents felt fully content with their sons and spent their life contemplating on *Brahman*. Eventually they passed away and reached the heavenly abode.

Having lost their parents, the ten siblings could not live there anymore. They went to the place where their parents practised their meditation. They decided to meditate. But they did not know how and for what. A discussion ensued between the brothers as follows:

One of the Brothers: What is the meditation that gives us the greatest happiness ?

Another Brother: Greatness is not important. As we grow and change, we should not experience misery. We should get happiness only. Tell me the means for that.

Another one: In that case, being the head of the house is the best.

Yet Another one: No. The position of the head of a village is better.

Yet Another one: Being head of a district is still better.

Yet Another one: Why go about measuring on the scale of the head of a village or district or Kingdom etc.? The highest in that order is Lord Indra. Indra's position is at the top. His status and wealth are the supreme.

Eldest brother: Dear brothers! Some of my past experiences are coming to my thoughts. It looks like I must have practiced some austerities in my previous birth and had to discontinue them due to some impediment. Anyway, that is not important now. You want to find the best of wealth and happiness. The real wealth is that which remains even after the creation ends. That is the position of Hiranyagarbha.

All the other Brothers: You said it correctly. You say that you recall something. Maybe that is what we want. Please tell us the means to attain the position of Hiranyagarbha.

Eldest Brother:

पद्मासनगतो भास्वान्ब्रह्माहमिति तेजसा ।
सृजामि संहरामीति ध्यानमस्तु चिराय वः ।।

padmāsanagato bhāsvānbrahmāhamiti tejasā |
sṛjāmi saṃharāmīti dhyānamastu cirāya vaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 86, Sloka 35

I am the Creator Brahma seated in the lotus posture and shining radiantly. I am creating. I am ruling. I am dissolving. Let us practice our meditation as above following the methodology of *samvarga vidyā* (reflecting that I am the creator). So let us adopt

'*ahamgrahopāsana'* (a meditation in which the meditator meditates that he is none other than the meditated). That way we shall all become *Brahma-s* like the worm becomes the wasp (This alludes to a proverb in Sanskrit. It says that by incessant thinking a worm turns to be the wasp).

The discussions ended with the above conclusion. The ten brothers immediately took up serious meditation. They entered into *samādhi*. They became still like statues. They lost all sense of time. No one knew how many hundreds or thousands of years went by. The ten bodies withered away and dropped down. Wild animals ate the dead bodies.

Eons passed. Several cycles of creation went by. Finally the Great Dissolution (end of a *kalpa* – 4.32 billion years) occurred. The entire creation phase ended. Brahma alone was there. Nay, Brahma thought that only he was present. He was unaware that the ten sons of Indu were right there because of the power of their meditation.

My Lord Brahma! Many *kalpa*s elapsed in that manner. In course of time, all ten of them became Brahma-s. Each one started his own creation in their minds. In one of the universes created thus, I was appointed to the position of the Sun. It is my function to divide the time.

After narrating his story as above, he concluded on an interesting note :

विविधकल्पनया वलिताम्बरं यदिदमुत्तम जागतमुत्थितम् ।
करणजालकमाहितमोहनं तदखिलं निजचेतसि विभ्रमः ।।

vividhakalpanayā valitāmbaraṃ
yadidamuttama jāgatamutthitam |
karaṇajālakamāhitamohanaṃ
tadakhilaṃ nijacetasi vibhramaḥ ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 87, Sloka 12

Noble Sir, do not think that you did not create any of these worlds or wonder where all these universes in your space were. These worlds are all the fancy imaginations of the mind only. One has to question and find out only if they happen to be really existing.

The entire visible world is like a snare for the senses. It will infatuate you as long as you feel attached to it. It is a projection as if several layers of space are folded and cast. It is an illusion in the mind, nothing is real. On the strength of your own intention you entered the minds of Aindavas and therefore, you see these worlds.

After listening to the words of the Sun, Brahma was totally befuddled. Brahma thought over it for considerable time. Finally he asked the Sun:

Brahma: Gosh, Ten Brahma-s! Everyone is carrying out their own creation! What is my creation then ? What purpose does it serve?

Sun: (After a careful consideration): Sir, my duty is to divide time. I create the day and night for the convenience of the people. What advantage do I have ? Nothing. Still I perform my work. I just do it without any motive or in the expectation of drawing any benefit for myself.

Multiple images are seen in the waters of lakes and tanks as my reflections. But I am not the creator of those images. Nor do I derive any advantage. Yet, the process goes on. In the same way, you carry out creation. In truth, the creation just radiates from you.

Whether the finite creatures put on or drop different bodies or not, it is immaterial for you. You have no benefit from it. You do not have any desire. The creation is an amusement, an entertainment, a responsibility, a duty for you.

Whether it is you or me, if we shirk from our duties and functions, it amounts to dereliction of our responsibility. Can we desist our functions ? Can a mirror ever be not reflecting? Further, people who give up performing certain works do so with a purpose. We have no such motivation. Therefore, the desire to give up can not arise in us.

People like us have to carry out our functions from a worldly point of view only. Whether we act or not cannot be based on the Absolute point of view.

The creations done by other Brahma-s can only be mentally visualized by you; you cannot see them with your physical eye. This is in contrast to your own creations which will be visible to your physical eye. You cannot also destroy the creations of the Aindava Brahma-s. It is so because the work done using the physical motor organs (*karma indriya*-s) of an individual can be destroyed by another, but not the firm determination in his mind. The gross body may go, but the determination in the mind will not alter as exemplified by Aindava Brahma-s.

An ardent seeker desiring to get rid of the worldly bondage achieves the Supreme *brahman* only through a resolute mind. The finite individual is drawn into the phantasmagoria of the world by the strength of his mind. I shall relate to you a true story in order to bring home the idea of how very strange the ways of a strong mind are.

76. Story of A Different Indra and Ahalya

Sun: Once upon a time there was a King named Indradyumna. He was the ruler of Magadha. He had a very beautiful wife. Her name was Ahalya. There was a young Brahmin boy by name Indra in the same town. He was well-known for his attractive looks.

Queen Ahalya once attended the recital of a *purāna* (mythical story). There, she heard the story that Ahalya, the wife of Sage Gautama was smitten by Lord Indra. Since that time, an incredible thought occurred to queen Ahalya. She wondered why the handsome Indra in the town did not fall for her though she was also Ahalya. She used to always think of Indra and pine for him. Over time her extra marital desire for Indra grew. She fell madly in love with him. Her behaviour turned crazy. Taking pity on the plight of her queen, one of her lady attendants mediated and arranged meetings between the two.

The King, Indradyumna came to know of his wife's extra marital affair eventually. The word also spread around in the Kingdom. The lovers, Ahalya and brahmin boy, Indra did not heed the warnings given by the King. Punishments were imposed on them. But there was no change. They were made to stay in cold waters in severe winters for a very long time. It made no difference to the couple. Finally, the King asked each of them separately the same question: "How could you manage to be so happy in spite of being immersed in icy waters in this biting cold.". To the surprise of the King, both queen Ahalya and brahmin boy Indra gave the same answer. They said: "Dear King! We love each other deeply. We think of each other every moment. Our bodies and their beauty initially helped the process. But now we have forgotten our bodies. Our minds are now completely in union. That is sufficient for us. We do not mind even if you cut our bodies into pieces."

The reply enraged King Indradyumna to no bounds. He got them rolled over on burning embers. They were trampled by elephants, lashed with whips, and mercilessly beaten. Yet, their faces remained bright with happiness and there was no change in their response, in fact their love for each other increased in proportion to the severity of the punishment imposed on them. Indra said that he saw only Ahalya in everything and everywhere. Likewise it was Indra everywhere and in everything for Ahalya. The King could not make head and tail of it. On being questioned, Indra told the King as follows:

Indra: "My Dear King! When we say "I" , who is exactly that "I"? 'I' is the mind. The mind creates the body. Even if the body is destroyed, nothing happens to the mind. Spells and curses wouldn't affect the mind. That is the nature of the mind.

Ahalya is established in my mind like the God's idol installed in a temple. The reason for it is my intense longing for her. None can erase it from my mind. When a strong desire gets firmly established in the mind, it does not allow another thought or desire to arise. That's the advantage of it. No sorrows or misery will touch me.

Who is a finite individual ? Whoever has got a mind, he is the individual. Mind is his first sheath. It is the scaffold, the stem. The gross body is merely an outer growth of branches and boughs over the scaffold. If the branches go, nothing happens to the main stem. But if the main stem itself goes, no branches will survive. Dear King! Please remember that the mind is primary. Protect it. Implant good thoughts in it. There is no use for you in trying to alter my determination. The punishments awarded to me by you and your ministers cannot change my intentions."

The above words of Indra further infuriated the King. Feeling helpless, he requested a saint by name Bharata, who was in his court at that time, to cast a spell on Indra who, according to the King, committed a heinous crime. That sage did not, however, react immediately. He reflected over the matter and finally cursed that both Indra and Ahalya be dead. After being cursed by the saint, Indra and Ahalya addressed him :

Indra and Ahalaya: Maharshi! It is foolish on your part to curse us. You only wasted your spiritual powers. Our gross bodies may die by your curse; but our minds wouldn't. So we lose nothing because of your curse.

As they spoke those words, their bodies collapsed and died. But soon they were reborn as a couple in the form of two birds. Irrespective of where they were born later, they always remained as a husband and wife. They are now born as a Brahmin pair in the creation of Aindava Brahma-s. Hence, Lord Brahma, spells and curses have no power over the mind.

77. Body and World are Mind Congealed

Sun: Lord Brahma! The creation by Aindava Brahma-s also arises from their mental power. So no one else can destroy it. It is also not proper for elders like you to destroy it. If you ask why it cannot be destroyed, please note that one may break a diamond into small pieces; but none can take away the reflections in it. The mental imaging is similar to the reflections.

So Sir, leave the creation of Aindava Brahmas alone. You go ahead with your own creation. It is meaningless to say that the space is all filled up with Aindava's creations and there is no space left out for any new creation.

Space comes in three flavors – Consciousness-space, Mind-space and Elemental space. All the three are unlimited. Your mind-space is different from their mind-space. Both are embedded in Consciousness-space. You carry on with your creation in your mind-space and be undisturbed as that space. That in brief is my suggestion since you have asked me.

Thus ended the narration of the Sun from Aindava creation.

Brahma: (Continuing his discourse with his son, Vasishta): Vasishta! I thought over deeply what the Sun told me and decided that what he said was correct. Since all the three spaces are infinite, I felt that I should continue to carry on with my function.

Since the Sun from the Aindava creation helped me with his advice, I requested him to be my first Manu. Manu, as you are aware, is the one who executes the process of creation as per the intentions in my mind. The Aindava Sun very happily accepted my request. He split himself into two -- one to continue as the Sun in the Aindava creation and the other as Manu in my creation.

My Son! The single take home message from all the events recounted by me is that it is the resolve of a mind that lies behind every happening – the ten Aindava-s turned out to be Brahma-s because of the strength of their mind - Indra and Ahalya were born again and again as a couple because of the determination in their mind - my creation of these worlds proceeds because of my willpower - the Sun is able to fulfil his functions in two worlds because of his firm resolution in his mind.

To put in a nut shell, it is the mind that creates. Or expressing it in another way, it is the mind that appears as the creation !

When water solidifies, it is ice. As a liquid, it is called water. Names may be different, but the substance is the same. When Consciousness mixed up with subtle impressions takes a subtle form, it is called a mind or a finite individual. When the same thing congeals further, it is called body. When the mind precipitates in different consistencies, it becomes the world. When its dense nature and the impressions are eradicated, it remains in its original pure form – as *brahman*.

Vasishta! The important point to be noted is this. What truly exists is Consciousness alone. It is Pure Consciousness. When impressions impregnate It, it is mind. The mind is the finite individual. When it gets more consolidated, it is the body and the world. The sequence of the things is analogous to different forms of clay – in its dry state, it is clay powder. Mixed with a little water, it is a lump of clay. When the lump takes a flat shape, it is a tile. When it gets a round shape, it is a pot. And so on the shapes may vary. But what is actually there behind all these forms? Is it not basically the clay only? In the same way, it is *Brahman* alone that is Pure Consciousness, mind, the finite individual, the gross body, and the world.

A spiritual aspirant should, therefore, introspect and investigate the nature of his mind. He has to find its dense and tenuous spots. He should identify the stored impressions. Cleanse them all with discrimination. The residuum will be Pure Consciousness. That itself is liberation.

78. The Nature of Mind

Vasishta: (Not fully satisfied with the long sermon given by his father, Brahma): Father! What you say now does not seem to be consistent with your previous position. You taught me earlier that the power of spells and curses was so immense that no other power could neutralize them. But you say now that the curses are effective only on the physical body and not on the mind.

We have several instances of curses affecting the mind. For example, when I cursed my disciple SaudAsa, he was so mad at me that he killed my son. Sage Agastya once cursed King Nahusha, who was in the position of Indra. As an effect of it, Nahusha became a python. He even tried to swallow his own descendent Bheema.

That being the position, how can you say that curses will not affect the mind?

You also say that the body is nothing but the precipitate from the mind. When that is the case, a curse acting on the body means it is acting on the mind. Does not swallowing ice amount to drinking water?

How can you now take the stand that curses do not affect the minds ? Kindly explain.

Brahma: Vasishta! A person has two eyes. They look alike from outside. But one of them is blind and the other is normal. He can see with the normal eye. Whether open or shut, nothing can be seen through the other eye. Mind is like the normal eye; the body is like the blind eye.

Both the mind and body are impermanent. Of the two, the mind is more lasting than the body. The body is fragile. Not only curses, but also witchcraft and physical punishments affect the body. The mind does not end until the ignorance is gone. It is independent in some aspects but dependent on certain others. It can do things independently without the help of the physical body. But the physical body cannot work without the mind. We have seen in the story of Indra and Ahalya that Indra could stay happy even without a body because of his strong mind. Do not think that it was a story fabricated by me.

You know the story of the Sage *ḍīrghatapa*. He fell down into a dilapidated well and could not come out of it. So he practiced mentally many rituals sitting in that well. As a result of those austerities, he attained the position of Indra.

ṣaudāsa and others in the example you gave lost their mental balance under the power of curses, because they lacked determination. Their minds were not mature enough to have necessary discrimination.

What I spoke to you about the power of curses previously should be understood in relation to the relative strengths of the minds of the one who cast the spell and the one who received it. Whosesoever is the stronger mind, that mind wins.

Though it is only clay that has changed in form to a pot, the characteristics of pot differ from that of clay. For example, a pot floats in water whereas a lump of clay fizzles and sinks. Similarly, though the body is precipitated out of the mind, the body and mind possess different characteristics. So do not be concerned about the body. Investigate and find out the true nature of mind. Cleanse it of the impressions from past experiences and achieve Pure Consciousness.

[**Note:** After narrating the above conversation between him and his father Brahma, the Creator, Sage Vasishta continued the teaching in his own words.]

Vasishta: Rama! My purpose of narrating the story of Leela was to illustrate that space, time and percepts have no reality. I showed through the story of Sucika that the creation is nothing more than an imagination of the mind. The story of Aindava-s and the story of the lover couple, Indra and Ahalya, establish the power of the mind. Ponder over these stories and digest the message coming out of them.

[**Note:** Thus ends the 92nd *sarga*. Sage Valmiki uses prose form in the first part of the 93rd *sarga* and reverts to verses in the second part.]

Vasishta: I shall now explain to you, Rama, the nature of mind. Please listen carefully.

Whatever Is is nameless and unmanifest. That is *Brahman.* From that *Brahman* arose a world of high subtlety in which neither names nor forms could be discerned by anyone. It was in fact too subtle to be perceived. In course of time, *tanmātra*-s condensed into a mind. From that mind, the five fundamental elements in subtle form (*tanmātra*--s) manifested. From these elements originated a luminous individual. That individual had a tendency to be the composite of the subtle bodies. He is the creator Brahma. In other words, Brahma is a consolidated form of the mind. Hence, whatever he intends, that materializes. He, therefore, is also called *siddha sankalpa* or *sankalpa siddha* (*sankalpa* = intentions; *siddha* = fulfilled).

Rama ! Did you note how Brahma manifested? He originated out of affinity towards the insentient objective (*anātma* = not Self) five subtle elements. That is why he first created ignorance. Ignorance has the ability to make the Self tend towards objects. With the help of ignorance, the world that is perceived is created. From time immemorial, certain individuated fallacious reflections of Consciousness have been appearing as individuals in the visible world. All these individuals keep moving to the higher or lower worlds depending on their desires. Some of them performing meritorious works proceed towards liberation. Some others dissolve in the Supreme Self having attained the Self-Knowledge. The long and short of it all is that Brahma or Hiranyagarbha is the Collective mind. The entire creation takes place as per his intentions. In other words, it is the mind that is causal for creation. Hence there is no world for anyone eradicating the mind within himself.

79. Types of Adjuncts

Vasishta: Rama! There are three types of limiting adjuncts for the Infinite Consciousness in this creation. They are:

1. Good *(sātvic)* bodies;
2. Passionate (*rājasic*) bodies; and
3. Indolent (*tāmasic*) bodies.

These three types may be further divided into 14 subtypes. They are:

1. Goodness of best quality (*idam prathamatā or atyantottama satvā*)
2. Goodness of better quality (*uttama sattvā or guṇa pīvarī*)
3. Goodness of medium quality (*madhyama satvā or sasatvā)*
4. Goodness of lower quality (*athama satvā*)
5. Goodness of lowest quality (*atyanta tāmasī or atyantādhama satvā*)

Of these five goodness (*satvic*) qualities, the fifth one – *satvic* of lowest quality – is equivalent to the highest *tāmasic* quality. So it is called *atyanta tāmasī.*

6. Pure Passionate nature (*rājasī*) or pure impetuousness.
7. Passionate nature with goodness (*rājasa sātvikī*)
8. Passionate nature with passionate quality (*rājasa rājasī*)
9. Passionate nature of lazy quality (*rājasa tāmasī*)
10. Passionate nature with utmost laziness (*rājasātyanta tāamasī*

These five come under the types of passionate nature.

11. Indolent type (*tāmasī*)
12. Indolence of good nature *(tāmasa satvā*)
13. Passionate nature with laziness (tamorājasī)
14. Indolent nature of lowest quality (*atyanta tāmasī*)

These four types come under Indolent nature. There is no fifth subtype namely *tāmasa tāmasī* because it is equivalent to *atyanta tāmasī.*

Of these 14 divisions, the 5th, 14th, 9th and 13th are of similar nature. So, only 12 subdivisions remain. Rama! Their meaning is as follows:

The three qualities namely Satva, Rajas and Tamas are popular in Vedantic literature. Even though their actual meaning is a bit complicated, we can briefly state as follows: Satva is that quality of the primordial creative power which is responsible for positive and blissful aptitude of the finite individuals. Rajas is responsible for the action- oriented nature of the finite individuals. Tamas is responsible for the indiscriminate, cruel and inert natures of the finite individuals. In short, let us call *satva* as goodness, rajas as passionate and tamas as inertia or indolence.

Satvic subdivisions are as follows:

1. <u>Goodness of best quality</u>: The quest for the ultimate truth in these individuals are almost completed in the previous kalpa. They attain liberation in their first birth of the kalpa. E.g. Sage Sanaka, Sage Sanandana etc.

2. <u>Goodness of better quality</u>: These individuals attain liberation in 5 or 6 births in the kalpa. E.g. Maharishi Narada etc.

3. Goodness of medium quality: In the kalpa, these individuals improve their good nature with each birth and attain liberation in about a hundred births. E.g. Many Maharishis.

4. Goodness of lower quality: These individuals attain liberation after many thousands of births. To recognize such individuals as realized individuals is very difficult. They appear to be immersed in the worldly affairs. E.g. Many seekers of liberation.

5. Goodness of lowest quality: These individuals do not have interest in spirituality. Liberation for these individuals in the kalpa is very difficult.

Rajasic or Passionate subdivisions are as follows:

6. Pure passionate nature: These individuals will be born as humans only after 2 or 3 lower types of births in the kalpa. They continue to be in the cycle of births and deaths. Since for these individuals the passionate nature remains as their main character, it is doubtful whether these can attain liberation. E.g. Warriors of highest quality.

7. Passionate nature with goodness: In these individuals, their passionate nature is mingled with some good nature. They remain in the worldly affairs, with full awareness of its futility. They practice virtuous deeds needed for attaining Self-Knowledge. E.g. *rājarśi-s.*

8. Passionate nature of passionate quality: These individuals are those that have led a virtuous life of passionate nature and attained certain celestial levels known as Yaksha, Gandharva and similar worlds. With some more practice, they may attain liberation E.g. King Chitraradha of Gandharva clan of celestial beings.

9. Passionate nature with lazy quality: In these individuals, the qualities of passion and laziness are present in equal measure. They are aware of Self-Knowledge, but they make very little effort to achieve it. They need hundreds of births to attain liberation. E.g. Ordinary seekers.

10. Passionate with utmost laziness: In these individuals lazy nature predominates over their passionate nature. They accept the virtue of good action, but make little effort to put it into practice. They need thousands of births to attain liberation. E.g. Ordinary people born in families with good traditions.

There are only four subdivisions amongst the Indolent type, since the 5th subdivision of good qualities and the pure quality of Indolent type are of similar nature.

11. Indolent Nature: These individuals attain liberation after several kalpas only E.g. Mean individuals.

12. Indolence with good quality: Though born in Indolent families, by virtue of their good qualities, they attain liberation in the current life itself. E.g. Prahlada, Karkati.

13. Passionate nature with laziness: This type of people come under the subdivisions of passionate nature as rAjasa tAmasI with similar results. These individuals are born as seekers and attain liberation after hundreds of births.

14. Indolence of lowest quality: They are ineligible to attain liberation.

Rama! My intention in telling you about all these subdivisions is to inform you that the difference between the individuals and Brahma is only in their bodies. The entire world, before its creation, is in the Brahma. After a *kalpa,* it merges and remains as Brahma only.

80. Actor is Action

Rama: Sir ! What is the reason for the sense of "I am a separate self" (*jīvabhāva*)?

Vasishta: We discussed the origination of beings already. Why are you raising this question ?

Rama: Sir! You said that Hiranyagarbha and the finite individuals originated from *Brahman*. In other words, *Brahman* Himself had entered into the limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) to become a finite individual. That means the sense of separate self is not natural and it is an acquired adventitious character to *brahman*. If it is adventitious, there must be a cause for it. I do not find any possible cause other than the residual impressions from past lives. If there are impressions carried from past actions even before the individual was born, it implicitly means that there had been an agent, a "doer," for those actions. After all, no action could have happened in the absence of an actor.

This will raise a new question. If an 'actor' had been there already in the past, who was he ? Was it another finite individual or *brahman* Himself ? If it was another finite individual, the question about his origin remains an open-ended problem. If it were to be *brahman*, that would contravene His 'non-doer ship.' To get over this conundrum, we have to postulate that the separate individual is beginningless (*anādi*).

If it is proposed that the finite individual is beginningless, we cannot say that the finite individual manifests occasionally with gaps of being unmanifested in-between. But then if we say that the finite individual is not occasional in his manifestation, we cannot hold that *Brahman* acquires finiteness (*jīvatva*) due to adjuncts (*upādhi*-s). Thus, we are faced with a contradiction in deciding the causal factor for the arising of the finite individual (*jīvatva*).

Vasishta:

अभिन्नौ कर्मकर्तारौ सममेव परात्पदात् ।
स्वयं प्रकटतां यातौ पुष्पामोदौ तरोरिव ।।

abhinnau karmakartārau samameva parātpadāt |
svayaṃ prakaṭatāṃ yātau puṣpāmodau taroriva ||
Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 95, Sloka 1

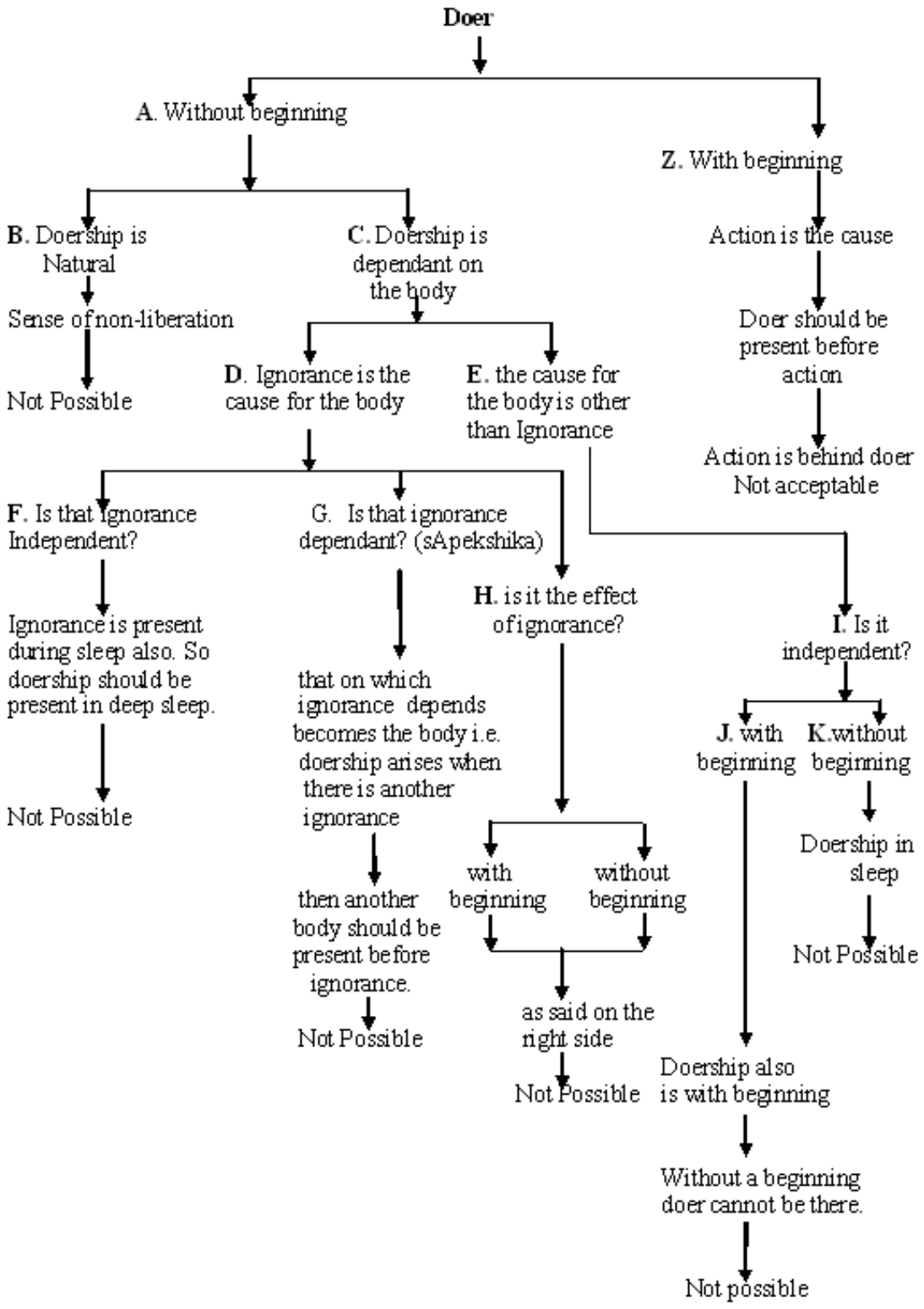
A flower bloomed. Fragrance spread. Which is born first? It is not possible to say which originated first. Both are born simultaneously. Similarly the doer and the action are not born separately. They are born at the same time. Both have their roots in ignorance. Individual beings also have their origin in ignorance.

Rama: Teacher! You may give an appealing analogy couched in beautiful poetry. But how to establish that the doer and action are born at the same time and hence they are not separate?

Vasishta: Rama! If you want that to be proved, let us examine it more closely. If the doer and action are distinct from one another, the doer either is beginningless or has a point of origin. Let us see the consequences of each possibility.

[**Note:** At this point Sage Vasishta expounded the issue resorting to a very complex and intricate argument. In order to help understand his logic easily, we shall first give a flow chart of the arguments presented by him and then take up a detailed analysis.]

81. Flow Chart to show Actor is Action



Conclusion from the flow chart: It has to be accepted that the actor and action are not separate and both arise because of ignorance only.

82. Explanation of the flow chart

Let us say that there is a doer distinct from the action done. If so, he would be either without a beginning or with a beginning.

Let us designate the first possibility (Without a Beginning) by **A** and let the second possibility (With a Beginning) be called **Z**.

Let us first consider the consequences of **A** (Without a Beginning).

How does he acquire 'doership'? Is it an intrinsic quality for him or it is adventitiously obtained occasionally due to a limiting adjunct?

Suppose the doer is without a beginning (**A**), but the 'doership' is natural to him – Argument **B**.

If the doer is without a beginning and the doership is intrinsic to him, then the quality of doership will never leave him. That means he cannot ever attain liberation. In other words, there is no liberation at all for a finite individual. But this conclusion stands in contradiction to what the concept and theory of liberation say.

Therefore, the argument 'B' is not acceptable.

Suppose the doer is without a beginning (**A**), but the doership is temporary due to a limiting adjunct – Argument **C**.

That means, the doership comes only when an adjunct is present, and not otherwise.

If a limiting adjunct is present, there should be a cause for it. What could be the cause? Could the cause be ignorance or something else?

Let us say it is ignorance (**D**).

If ignorance is the cause for the presence of the limiting adjunct, is it an independently arising cause (**F**) or it is a relative cause only dependent on another enabling cause (**G**)?

Let us take the argument **F**.

If **'F'** is valid (i.e. the ignorance is an independently arising cause for the presence of the limiting adjunct on the beginningless doer), then whenever ignorance exists, doership should also exist.

Ignorance is present during deep sleep state (*suShupti*). So the doer should possess the doership during deep sleep state also. That means that the doer should be taking action during deep sleep. This situation is not valid as per our own experience.

Therefore, the Argument 'F' is not acceptable.

Let us now examine the alternative possibility given by '**G**.'

In this scheme of things, there is an enabling cause for ignorance which in turn is the cause for the limiting adjunct. That means there is a cause for ignorance, and it is different from ignorance. In other words, that cause is a conditioning adjunct for ignorance.

Postulating a limiting adjunct for ignorance which itself is a limiting adjunct makes it inconsistent.

Therefore, the Argument 'G' is not acceptable.

Thus, ignorance cannot be a limiting adjunct for the beginningless doer.

Let us now consider the argument given in '**I**' – there must be some other cause for the beginningless doer than ignorance. In such a case, ignorance can either by itself be an effect or totally independent of any other factor. So the argument '**I**' will be that the limiting adjunct for the beginningless doer is something different from ignorance and also unrelated to ignorance. A question would then arise if that cause itself has a beginning or it is also beginningless.

Let us say that it has a beginning – Argument '**J**.'

If '**J'** were to be true, the doer will also have to have a beginning. But this position negates our very initial statement that the doer is beginningless.

Therefore, the Argument 'J' is not acceptable.

So let us now take up the next possibility. This would be that the limiting adjunct for the doer is caused by something that is not related to ignorance, is independent, beginningless – '**K**.' Because such a cause as proposed under '**K**' is beginningless and independent, it should be present during deep sleep also. The doership will therefore be present during deep sleep and hence the doer must be performing actions in deep sleep. This situation is contrary to our experience.

Therefore, the Argument 'K' is not acceptable.

In sum, it cannot be said that the cause for the limiting adjunct is an independent cause –'**I**.'

Next we shall examine the possibility that the cause is different from ignorance but it's an effect of ignorance – '**H**.'

Whatever may be the cause in 'H' be, let us see if it has a beginning or it is beginningless. If it has a beginning, it would be the same proposition as '**J.**' If it has no beginning, it would be the same as '**K**.' But we have already seen that '**J'** and '**K**' were not acceptable.

Therefore, the Argument 'H' is not acceptable.

In sum, none of the possibilities under Argument '**E**' are valid. We have also seen that the cause cannot be ignorance (Argument – '**D**') or any other cause (Argument '**E**'). This conclusion would imply that there is no causal factor at all for an adjunct to arise limiting the doer. Hence the 'doership' of the doer cannot be the result of a limiting adjunct.

We have also established that it cannot be his intrinsic nature (Argument – '**B**'). If it is neither intrinsic nor dependent on an adjunct, the doer cannot be beginningless.

Therefore, the Argument 'A' is not acceptable.

What is left now is the possibility that the doer is with a beginning – Argument **'Z.'**

If the doer has a beginning, it means, he was not there in the past and is born later on. What could be the cause for his birth? The only possible answer is that his birth is caused by the effects of his past actions. There is no escape otherwise. But such a postulate takes us back to the problem of infinite regress because, the past action would require another doer for his past actions.

Therefore, the Argument 'Z' is not acceptable.

Summing up, we have to accept that it is not possible to say that the doer is either beginningless or has a beginning. In order to solve the puzzling conundrum, we have to give up adhering doggedly to the idea that the doer is different from the action. We have to agree on the identity of the actor and action. We have also to agree that ignorance is the cause for both of them together.

Rama, mind is the result of ignorance. The action is the effect of mind. Ignorance is like the branch (of a tree). The mind is a flower. Action is the fragrance. People normally say that the flower has come out of the branch and the fragrance has come out of the flower. This formulation is true in some sense, but it is not the whole truth. Both the flower and the fragrance have come out of the branch and they have come at the same time. This is the actual truth.

Similarly, the mind has come out of ignorance. The mind is the doer. The actions have sprung out of the mind. So the sequence 'ignorance -- mind -- action' is the understanding in common parlance. It is like the sequence 'clay powder -- lump of clay -- pot.'

In a sense the pot is clay and the clay is pot. Likewise, mind is action and action is mind. Or actor is action and action is the actor. But what I proposed is still subtler than that.

There is a time lag between the lump of clay and its appearance as a pot. But there is no such time gap between the flower and its fragrance. Fragrance does not have a distinct form of its own different from the flower. Hence we are bound to accept that flower and fragrance are born out of the branch simultaneously and they are not two entities.

The position with respect to the mind and action is also exactly the same. Both manifest simultaneously from ignorance and are identical. The real cause for the emergence of a sense of separate self is ignorance. Because the actor is non-different from the action, your argument does not stand.

83. Mind or Action – Any one may go

Rama: Teacher! You proved that the actor and the action are one based on logical possibilities. But there is a theory of karma (action) as per the scriptures, and it is accepted by the knowledgeable elders.

साधुकारी साधुर्भवति पापकारी पापो भवति
पुण्यः पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति पापः पापेन ।

sādhukārī sādhurbhavati pāpakārī pāpo bhavati
puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati pāpaḥ pāpena |

Bruhadaranyakopaniśad 4-4-5

We have from *śruti* statements like 'One who functions virtuously will be born as a

virtuous individual. One who performs evil deeds will be born as a sinner.

It is evident from these mantras, that the actions done are causal for the birth and the nature of an individual. Does not the theory of 'simultaneous birth of actor and action' contradict the above sentences from the *Veda-s*?

Vasishta: It is a good question. But the important point is that you ought to bear in mind the perspective from which the Vedic statements are made. The theory of 'simultaneous birth of doer and action' and the mantras from Vedas quoted by you pertain to different viewpoints.

The theory of 'simultaneous birth of doer and action' expounded by me establishes that action is a quality of the mind and not that of the Self. There are certain *shruti* mantras that say so. For example:

तस्माद्यत्पुरुषो मनसाभिगच्छलि तद्वाचा वदति तत्कर्मणा करोति

tasmādyatpuruṣo manasābhigacchali tadvācā vadati tatkarmaṇā karoti

Aruna prasna 1-23-1

What is thought about in the mind, is expressed in words and is carried out by action organs.

The above reference reveals that the mind is causal for actions. The quotes from *śruti* mentioned by you belong to the chapter concerned with establishing that every action will necessarily have an effect. The mantras are from different chapters and are made in the context of different objectives. They should not, therefore, be mixed up.

The essential point we have to understand is that:

1. Mind is born out of ignorance;
2. Mind is the source of action;
3. Mind is the conditioning adjunct for the Pure Consciousness; and, hence,
4. Mind is the doer and also the experiencer.

त्रीण्यात्मनेऽकुरुतेति मनो वाचं प्राणं

trīṇyātmane'kuruteti mano vācaṃ prāṇaṃ

Bruhadaranyakopaniśad 1-5-3

The triad -- mind, speech and life-force (*prāṇa*) -- are created by Prajapati for his own purpose.

śruti mantras like the above support what I have taught you.

Rama! You quoted the mantra that says that a doer of meritorious deeds will get a virtuous birth. From that you want to derive that action precedes the birth of an individual.

But what is an individual? It is nothing but the Consciousness reflected in the mind. Is the mind eternal, or transient? The mind looks to be eternal from one perspective and transitory from another. But then what does it mean to say eternal or temporary? Say, you notice the shadow of your house falling on the ground during the day. There is no shadow in the night. The next day you see the shadow again. You declare that it is the shadow of your house. The shadow of yesterday had gone yesterday itself. But you speak as though the shadow present now and the shadow of the previous day are one and the same. If they are one, then the shadow is permanent and if they are different, the shadow has no permanency.

Or take another case. You see your face in the mirror. The mirror is moved aside. Then the face disappears. You bring the mirror back in front of your face. The face reappears. Now, do you say that the previous image and the present image are one or not? If you say that it is one, it implies that the image has been there all the time. If not, the image is temporary. But if you say that the second image is different, you should be able to say in what way it differs.

The case of the mind is similar to the above examples. It is present now and working. It's dissolved in deep sleep. After you wake up, you find the mind functioning again. Is it the same mind after you are awake or a different one? There are two possible answers:

1. We have to agree that it is a new mind because the earlier one had dissolved.

   Or,

2. We have to say that one and the same Consciousness was reflected in the past mind and is being now reflected in the present mind and therefore, the mind is the same.

Of these two alternatives, which one is true? In order to decide, we should first be clear about what it means to say that the mind 'dissolved' in deep sleep.

The ignoramus thinks that 'dissolution' means annihilation or becoming nothing.

Birth is thought to be the generation of a new thing from nothing. But it does not work like that. The knowers say that dissolution is disappearance and genesis is manifestation or appearance. I also use these terms in that sense only. Whether it is a shadow or a reflection or the mind, their dissolution means that they stopped to appear. They are not visible anymore. If they are born again, it means that they are visible.

When the mind manifests, the world appears. When the mind dissolves, the world disappears. The reason for the arising of the mind is to forget or ignore one's own true nature. It is called ignorance of Self or nescience (*avidyā*).

So it is better to think of the doer and the action in terms of a flower and its fragrance rather than a seed and the plant. The flower and fragrance analogy will help you in understanding better the nature of the mind.

Rama: Thank you, Sir ! I understand that the phantasmagoria of the world will end by either the dissolution of the mind or the annihilation of action. Kindly tell me, sir, the respective method to end each of them.

Vasishta: You do not have one method of ending the light and a separate method to end the heat in sunrays. If one is eliminated, the other will also be gone. Similarly, mind and action are both present together in ignorance. So if one ends, the other automatically ends.

There are two ways to achieve it. One way is through Hatha Yoga – control of the life-force using the Eightfold path of Ashtanga yoga. The second one is Raja Yoga – direct control of the mind. Using either of these techniques, one may annihilate the mind or action. Ending any one of them will automatically not only end the other but also will destroy the ignorance which is at the root of both of them.

84. Mind is the Key

Vasishta: (Continuing) Rama! We got into a discussion on the nature of mind after we completed the story of Aindava. There is a lot more to be learnt about the mind. So we shall take up the subject of ending the mind a little later on. But first appreciate the fact that the mind is the key for Self-realization.

At the same time, know that the mind is also very difficult to understand. Assessing the nature of the mind from various angles, the knowers had described the mind with fifteen different names. These names are indicative of its nature. They are:

1. *Manas* or Thoughts and counter-thoughts
2. *Buddhi* or Intellect
3. *āhaṃkāra* or I-consciousness (Ego)
4. *Citta* or Memory
5. *Karma* or Action
6. *Kalpana* or Imagination
7. *ṣamsmṛiti* or *ṣmṛiti* or Recollection
8. *vāsana* or Impressions (Tendencies)
9. *vidyā* or Knowledge
10. *vismṛiti* or Forgetfulness
11. *malam* or Impurity
12. *indriya* or Sense organ
13. *prakṛiti* or Nature
14. *māyā* or Illusion
15. *kriya* or Action by the Mind

The significance of the names is as follows:

1. *manas* or Thoughts and counter-thoughts: Pure Consciousness is called '*manas*' when It appears as though mixed up with ignorance and as a result obtains diverse forms (vikalpa) and arises in several manifested forms.

2. *buddhi* or Intellect : Pure Consciousness gets the name Intellect when the diverse manifested forms are categorised and each is identified with a specific name (like this is earth, this is water etc.).

3. *āhaṃkāra* or I-consciousness (Ego) : Pure Consciousness gets the name I-consciousness (Ego) when It develops a contracted existence with attachment to the body that had formed out of the five elements like water, earth etc. and thinks that 'I am as this body' or 'I am as this sense organ etc.' Bondage arises from such identifications.

4. *citta* or Memory : Pure Consciousness is called '*citta*,' when it loses discrimination and mixes up the real with unreal, and the infinite with the finite in a haphazard manner and in the process forgets some things and remembers some others.

5. *karma* or Action : Pure Consciousness is called '*karma*' when it shows non-existing things and makes an effort to possess them by moving the body and organs hither and thither.

6. *kalpana* or Imagination : Pure Consciousness is known as '*kalpana*' when it forgets Its true nature of being Infinite and Perfect, and imagines Itself to be contracted to the limits of a body.

7. *samsmriti* or *smriti* or Recollection : The world comprises objects that are experienceable. Some of them might have already experienced Consciousness. When a desire arises either to experience them again or to have a new experience, pure Consciousness gets the name as *ṣamsmṛiti* or *ṣmṛiti* or Recollection.

8. *vāsana* or Impressions (Tendencies) : All experiences leave an impression. Pure Consciousness is called '*vāsana*' when it remains in subtle form as an impression without action.

9. *vidyā* or Knowledge : Many types of thoughts keep arising. Sometimes a thought may arise that the apparently visible things are all unreal and they appear owing to ignorance. When Consciousness takes the form of such a thought, It is called '*vidyā*.'

10. *Vismriti* or Forgetfulness : When Consciousness forgets itself, It is named '*Vismṛiti*' in that stage. During this stage, Its own true nature gets veiled from Itself.

11. *malam* or Impurity : Pure Consciousness in Its stage of imagining all sorts of things is called Impurity. Impurity happens when it is in its projection stage.

12. *Indriya* or Sense organ : Pure Consciousness is called 'sense organ or *indriya*' when It pleases the Supreme Self, who is in the form of a finite individual through the senses of vision, hearing, touch etc.

13. *prakṛiti* or Nature :" Pure Consciousness is called Nature or *prakṛiti* in Its stage of generating the perceptibles because It is Itself both the efficient and material cause of creation.

14. *māyā* or Illusion : What really exists is Consciousness only. But Consciousness is not visible and we see only some worldly objects. Pure Consciousness in Its stage when a really existing thing is invisible and non-existing things are made visible, It is called *māyā*

15. *kriya* or Action : A cause and effect relationship gets established when an action takes place through seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching. Consciousness is called '*kriya*' when It is in the stage of establishing a relationship between the cause and effect. Say, one sees a lump of clay, a pot, their natural characteristics, and based on these observations determines that the clay is the cause for the pot. Consciousness in that stage is called '*kriya*.'

Learned Pundits gave innumerable other names for the mind depending on the context and situation. I have described to you the most significant fifteen of them.

85. Mind Is both Sentient and Insentient

Rama: Sir ! Going by the explanation given by you for the 15 names, it is clear that Consciousness Itself is the mind. But the mind is generally considered to be inert. Several scriptures too describe the mind to be insentient. Please make it clear to me whether the mind is sentient and insentient.

Vasishta: It is neither of them. It is different from the two.

चिन्निःस्पन्दो हि मलिनः कलङ्कविकलान्तरम् ।
मन इत्युच्यते राम न जडं न च चिन्मयम् ।।

cinniḥspando hi malinaḥ kalaṅkavikalāntaram |
mana ityucyate rāma na jaḍaṃ na ca cinmayam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 96, Sloka 41

A vibration (movement) takes place when Consciousness gets delimited by a conditioning adjunct. It is as though Consciousness is contaminated from outside by the adjunct. But Consciousness remains unstained and pure inside. The mind is Consciousness that is pure and uncontaminated inside but is tainted from outside. The mind cannot be called inert because it is internally pure Consciousness only. Being tainted externally by the limiting adjunct, it cannot be said to be sentient also.

Hence, the mind is technically described by terms like "Different from Being and Non-being (*sadasad vilakśaṇa*)," "Distinct from Consciousness and Non-consciousness *(cidacit vibhinna*)," "Inert and Active" etc.

The mind was studied and analysed by many experts from different perspectives. Based on the faculty of its function, the mind is divided as thoughts and counter thoughts, intellect, memory, ego etc.

Rama, I would like to make a point with respect to different scriptures here because you said that some scriptures described it as inert. Followers of the theories of Nyaya, Sankhya, Jaimini, Arhata, Buddha, Vaiseshika, Pancharatra etc. commented on the mind in their own way. All those differing viewpoints also are scriptures only. But what is important is to establish which of them can be accepted as the true means of Knowledge.

[**Note:** Sage Valmiki normally does not indulge in the scriptural positions of different systems. But here, he made an exception. Based on his analysis, some scholars tried to fix the period of the book. We discussed in Chapter 1, the dangers in adopting such analysis]

The names given to the mind by different schools of philosophy are like the names of the roles played by an actor. The promoters of various theories think that they discovered a new theory. But they are all like travellers taking different routes in order to reach the same city. The destination is the City of Absolute Truth.

The one, who reached the city from the eastern Gate says that it looks like the 'eye of a fish.' The one from the western Gate says that it is like a hill resort. The one from the southern side says that it is located in a forested area. The one from the northern side says that it is on a river bank. All have reached the same city and are speaking truthfully. But nobody has comprehended the whole truth.

It's all the same whether a man who lost his senses had seen the world or not. An unconscious person cannot see the world even if his eyes are open. One with a mind only sees the world. If the mind is absent, there is no world. So the mind shows the world or the mind is the world. Both inert and alert things exist in the world. Therefore, these two should also be present in the mind, which is the cause for the world. That is why I said that the mind is neither sentient nor insentient. There is another reason also. If the mind is completely inert, it cannot understand anything. If it is alert only, it cannot remain dormant in the state of deep sleep. So the mind has to be described as '*jaḍājaḍa*' or alert-and-inert.

There is yet another point. It is because of the mind only that the world takes the form of both happiness and misery. If the mind were to be entirely pure Consciousness only, it would not have been a cause for the miserable nature of the world. If the mind were to be inert like a stone, it would not have been possible to experience the world. Hence, the nature of the mind has to be 'Different from Consciousness and Non-consciousness *(cidacit vilakśaṇa*)."

Rama: Sir ! You ask how a world consisting of insentient and sentient things could arise out of the mind, if the mind itself was not inherently both sentient and insentient. On similar grounds, I ask you how pure Consciousness which does not have a contact with inertness could give rise to the mind which is a mix of both sentience and insentience.

Vasishta: Rama! A spider, which is a sentient creature, produces the inert cobweb. How is that possible ? When it is a fact observed directly, such questions have no meaning. What we can infer from it is that a sentient thing may produce another sentient, insentient or sentient-insentient thing. But an insentient thing cannot produce a sentient thing.

Rama: Is that just based on your logic or do we have any authority for it?

Vasishta: We have it straight from the Upanishad itself.

यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः संभवन्ति ।
यथा सतः पुरुषात्केशलोमानि तथाऽक्षरात्संभवतीह विश्वम् ॥

yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhṇate ca
yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ saṃbhavanti |
yathā sataḥ puruṣātkeśalomāni
tathā'kṣarātsaṃbhavatīha viśvam ||

ṃundakopaniśad 1-1-7

Just like the spider creates and again swallows back the cobweb, just as the herbs sprout out of the earth, or like the beard and moustache grow to a living man, the world comprising the sentient and insentient objects manifests from the imperishable *brahman*. Once you imbibe the meaning of the above *śruti* sentence, there is no scope for any further doubt or argument in the matter.

Rama: Revered Teacher! You are repeatedly emphasizing that the mind is born out of pure Consciousness. In other words, pure Consciousness created the mind. There cannot be creation without a mind. That means, even before the mind is born, Consciousness should have had another mind. It does not make sense to say that there was a mind even before a mind was created. It is inconsistent to say that the pure Consciousness did the creation without a mind. How do we resolve this conundrum?

Vasishta: There is another puzzle similar to that. Let me tell you what it is.

Suppose that the mind is not born of *brahman*. It should have then been born out of nothing only. That is not possible. On the other hand if the mind is born out of *brahman*, it amounts to say that *brahman* is vested with action. This is also not possible. How do we solve the riddle?

Rama! If you follow the Upanishads correctly, we will not get into such traps. What the Upanishads state is as follows: *Brahman* which is pure Consciousness comes in contact with Illusion or *māyā* .The illusion is distinct from being *sat* or *asat* (existent – non-existent). The theory is that the mind is born from the contact of *brahman* with *māyā.*

Because *māyā* is distinct from being existent – non-existent, a question cannot be raised regarding from where or how it has originated. Because the mind is created from the combination of *brahman* and illusion, the action cannot be attributed to *brahman* directly. Since *Brahman* is in contact with the illusion and its powers, He does not need the help of another mind. So by accepting the teachings of Upanishads, such puzzles get solved.

Rama, you are trying to examine in depth the origin of the mind about which I have been speaking to you. An important point that you should keep on top of your mind is the context of our discussion. Why we got into an involved discussion on the origin of the mind, the five fundamental elements, world, and the order of creation and so on is to arrive at the counter-intuitive conclusion that there is no creation. All this visible world is only a phantasm arising out of the association with *māyā* othing is ever born; nothing is ever lost. It is pure Consciousness only that pervades all. So conduct your examination without losing sight of the above fact.

86. Story of the Mind

Vasishta: Rama! Let me suggest a little strategy for you to get over such conundrums. Focus your mind on the Supreme Self instead of getting entrapped in questions like what the mind is or where it has come from.

संयोजितं परे चित्तं शुद्धं निर्वासनं भवेत् ।
ततस्तु कल्पनाशून्यमात्मतां याति राघव ।।

saṃyojitaṃ pare cittaṃ śuddhaṃ nirvāsanaṃ bhavet |
tatastu kalpanāśūnyamātmatāṃ yāti rāghava ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 98, Sloka 2

When the mind is focused on *Brahman*, it gets purified. That is to say that the stored impressions in the mind are erased. Once the impressions go away, the mind will not fantasize a world. When there is no more fantasizing, it remains in its original form as Pure Consciousness.

Rama! Not only the world consists of the mobile and the immobile things, but also bondage and liberation are dependent on the mind. I shall tell you the story of mind to illustrate the point.

There was a huge forest extending to several miles. But in its appearance, it seemed to be as small as an atom. There were no wild animals in it, yet it appeared to be quite scary. A strange human being was present in that forest. He had a horrid appearance with thousands of eyes and hands. He held heavy clubs in his hands and was beating himself with them. Unable to bear the immense pain, he was running hither and thither.

Sometimes he even collapsed having lost his consciousness. While running back and forth, he often fell down into a dilapidated well. He would eventually come out of the well only to clobber himself with the clubs again. This process was going on and on repeatedly.

Once, while beating himself, he ran into an orchard of banana plants. He did not stay there. He retraced the path, and fell into an old dark well. He came out of it after a time and ran in some other direction. I happened to notice him and his running around. I could not understand whether the man was sane or insane. After watching him for a while, I stood in his way blocking his movement. I forced him to stop running. I asked who he was and why he was running like that. He wept and abused me. While abusing me, he also said as follows: " I am not anybody. I am not doing anything. You have come in my way. You are my enemy. As soon as you saw me, I turned unfit to experience either joy or misery."

While he was crying and shouting at the same time like that, his body parts began to fall down. First the head fell down. Then his hands, his chest and his abdomen fell down. As the body parts fell down, his crying subsided. He started laughing. When once all his organs dropped down, he went away happily.

I was nonplussed. I started to go on my way. But soon, I saw another person similar to him with the same behaviour. I held him back when he was about to fall into a dilapidated well. I asked him the same questions as before. He also abused me. Without listening to me, he went away in another direction saying that he did not want my useless teachings.

I saw thousands of such people in that forest. I tried to teach them all. Some of them heard me patiently. Those who heard me were relieved of their delusive bodies and went away happily. Others did not heed my advice. Some fell into deep wells. Some went to fruit orchards. Some others rested in the cool shade of the trees. But everyone continued running around.

Rama! That forest and the people in that forest continue to live the same way.

87. The Symbology in the Story of Mind

Rama: The story appears to be pregnant with a lot of inner meaning. Sir, kindly explain.

Vasishta: Rama ! Listen.

The **'forest'** is the cycle of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*). In the state of delusion, it appears to be vast. So I said that it was a huge forest. When the truth is realized, one finds that nothing is present there. So I said that it was as small as an 'atom.'

'The Man with thousands of hands' symbolizes the mind.

'I' (Vasishta) stands for discrimination – Self- Inquiry. Some minds could get permanent peace through discrimination. Some minds refused discrimination and continued their running.

The people who abused the Sage are those that refuse to study an issue with discrimination.
'Dilapidated well' symbolized performing evil and prohibited actions.

'Fruit orchard' stands for the desire for Heaven.

Those who do not like to come out of it refers to the persons who do virtuous deeds with a desire to live in heaven.

The tree shade represents worldly happiness.

Running hither and thither means the movement from one birth to another, and from one world to another.

The words, **'You are my enemy. I became useless on seeing you'** represents the annihilation of the mind by obtaining discriminating Knowledge.

'Crying loudly' signifies an aspirant's sorrow to drop the worldly enjoyments.

'Falling of the body parts' indicates abandoning the sensual desires.

'Thousands of hands and eyes' mean countless desires.

'Beating oneself' indicates the misery that piles up exponentially with rise in desires as and when some desires get fulfilled.

'Running while beating oneself' means being chased by one's own stored impressions.

The fall of the head is a symbol to show stabilization in thoughts;

Falling of limbs means end of desires;

Falling of chest means annihilation of desire for longevity;

Falling of abdomen means the end to the desire for over-eating;

Going away happily after the fall of all organs means dissolving oneself in the transcendental Bliss that is beyond the sensory organs and the mind.

'You have seen' means that even though the full realization has not dawned, a seeker who is diligent in his/her pursuit of Self-inquiry, will know the nature of the mind.

'You too do not recognize' implies that mere analysis as per the scriptural instructions will not lead one to the ultimate reality.

I revealed the underlying meaning to each of the phrases. Now, I shall tell you the salient message behind the story. Please know that however intelligent the mind may be, it brings about miseries on itself thinking that they are pleasures.

Lumberjacks in a forest felled large trees and sawed them into beams. After working for a considerable time, they took a break for lunch. They inserted wooden pegs in between the partially sawed timber before going for lunch. A monkey came along and sat on the log being sawed with one of its legs in-between the two partially sawed parts. It wanted to test its own strength by pulling out the wooden peg wedged between the two halves of the log. Its leg got crushed and it died. The actions of the mind are in no way different.

So the only way to control the mind is through the practice of deep meditation (*samAdhi*).

An important point to be noted while inquiring into the nature of mind is its cause. The mind is the effect of a 'changeless change (*vivarta*)' in *Brahman.* Mind may also be thought of to have formed as a 'modification' because of *māyā*. That means the mind may be taken to be a changeless change of *brahman* or as a modification of *māyā*.

Let me give you an example to make the point clear. The waves, spume, foam and bubbles in the sea are only water. For one who knows this, all the different forms are nothing but modulations of water.

As discussed earlier, if the beingness of the cause and the beingness of the effect are one and the same, the process is called a 'changeless change (*vivarta*).' The snake appearing on a rope is another example of a 'changeless change.' Water appearing in the form of waves, spume, foam and bubbles in the sea is also a 'changeless change.'

A child knows that the sea is water. But he does not realize that waves, foam, spume and bubbles are also water. He sees and experiences them as different things. From his viewpoint, the water in the sea has changed into waves, bubbles etc. just like a lump of clay has transformed into a pot. Such a change is known as 'modification (*parināma*).' The beingness of the cause and the beingness of the effect differ in the case of modification.

Now, think for yourself whether the waves etc. are to be considered as a changeless change or as a modification. To a realized one, they are a changeless change. To an ignorant one, they are modifications.

Likewise, the mind is only a changeless change of *brahman* for those who have realized that everything is *brahman*. The mind does not create any bondage for them. For an unrealized person, the mind appears to be a modification due to *mAyA*. The mind creates bondage for them.

Rama: Why should it be called a modification due to *māyā* ? Why could it not be called a modification of *Brahman* like in the case of water?

Vasishta: Modification process is possible only in those things that have constituent parts (components) within them. Because clay consists of different particles, it is possible to transform the clay lump into the shape of a pot by re-arranging the particles. One cannot do so if the substance did not contain separable components within it. For example, space is indivisible. Therefore, space is not amenable for modification. Similarly no modification can take place in *brahman* who is impartite. Hence, we cannot describe the mind to have formed as a modification of *brahman*.

māyā is dependent on *brahman* for its beingness. There is a possibility of modification taking place in *māyā*. One can think of mind, which has a mix of the characteristics of both *brahman* and *mAyA,* as a modification of *māyā* only.

So Rama! 'Mind' is a non-entity for a realized individual; it is no more than something like the snake over the rope. Hence for him, the world imagined by the mind is akin to the snake imagined on the rope. Bondage and liberation are also similar imaginations of the mind. The Knowers of Truth are unconcerned with the evolutionary order of the universe, the characteristics of bondage or the means of achieving liberation.

Only the ignorant view the mind as a modification of *māyā*. They cannot definitively say whether the mind exists or doesn't. So they call it by quaint names such as real-unreal weirdness (*sadasadvilakṣaṇa*), undefinable (*anirvacanīya*), sentient-insentient (*jaḍājaḍa*) etc. Consequently, every one of these names can also be applied to the world as well as to the bondage and liberation because the world, bondage and liberation are the creatures of the mind. Only the ignorant people concern themselves with the evolutionary order of the universe, the characteristics of bondage or the means of achieving liberation.

From the viewpoint of the Self-knowing people (if they can be said to have a viewpoint), all such issues are like children's stories (*bālakākhyāyika*). I shall narrate one such crazy and funny story to you. Please listen.

88. A Children's Crazy Story

Rama! A young prince has asked his governess to tell him a bed time story before going to sleep. She told a crazy story just for fun.

There was a city. But it was totally void. The King of that city had three sons. Of them, two were not yet born and the third one was yet to enter the womb of his mother. Meanwhile, some of the close relatives of the King died. So the three princes thought that the city was not auspicious for them. Hence, they went in search of another city. On the way, they saw three trees. Of them, two trees were yet to sprout and the seed for the third one was yet to be sown. The princes sat under one such tree, plucked its flowers to make garlands and wore them. They also ate the fruits of that tree.

Continuing their journey, around mid-day, they came across three rivers. Of them two rivers were already dried up and there was no water in the third one. They had their bath in these rivers, rested for a while and then continued their journey. At last, they reached a city called 'Future City'. It means the city that is yet to be constructed.

They saw three palaces in that city. Of them, two were yet to be constructed and the third one did not have walls. The princes made themselves comfortable in the palace without walls.

They saw three golden vessels in that palace. Of them, two were broken while the third one was in the form of powder. The princes took the powdered vessel and put ten handfuls, minus ten fistfuls of rice in it and cooked the rice. Then, they invited three Brahmins for the meals. Of them, two Brahmins did not have bodies while the third had no mouth. The Brahmin without a mouth ate ten handfuls of rice. The princes ate the remaining rice. After eating, the princes went hunting. They are still happily hunting in that future city.

The governess concluded the story saying, "Young prince! Do not ever forget the story. Keep it always in your mind. Then, you will become a great scholar."

Rama! After hearing the story, the young prince merrily laughed and fell asleep. I told you this story only to emphasize the fact that the story of the world created by the mind is no different.

How could the young prince feel happy, after hearing the story? He failed to recognize that the things in the story were not there. Instead, he fabricated the characters, the substances and the events as per his thoughts, believed them to be true and happily enjoyed the story through his own imaginative process.

The world is also an imagination like this story. If the imagination (*sankalpa*) is eradicated at its root, there will be no world left. No bondage then. Nor liberation. Things imagined like the snake over the rope may be seen and experienced. But could there be any substance or material in them? Would there be an orderly evolution for such imaginary things? No. The world born out of the mind, the grand creation, is also just like that.

So, Rama, leave alone probing into the process of creation. Make an effort to dissolve your mind.

89. The Story of King Lavana (The Story of Magic Tricks)

Vasishta: The reason I lay so much emphasis on the dissolution of the mind is because the mind itself is the world of bondage. The mind is the triad (*tripuṭi* – the observer-observing-observed). The mind is magic.

In order to make things clearer, I will tell you an illustrative story.

[**Note:** A reference to this story was made in the section "67. Illusion, its Effects and Liberation" in this book]

Once, the Kingdom of North Pandava was ruled by a King named Lavana. One day while the King was holding the court, an ostentatiously attired magician entered the premises. He waved pompously his wand made of peacock feathers.

About the same time, a stable boy made an entry into the court hall accompanied by a beautiful *Pancakalyani* horse (a particular species of horse having white legs and the mark of a star on its face). On seeing the impressive horse, every warrior present in the court coveted it. The stable boy, after paying respects to the King said, "My Lord! Your neighbour, King Malava gifted this wonderful horse to you. You will know its greatness and speciality once you ride on it." The magician too praised eloquently the quality of the horse as could be seen from its marks and goaded the King to take a ride on it right away.

The King was lured by the horse and the persuasive words of the magician. He half got up from his throne with the intention of taking a ride. Nobody knew what happened. The King froze in that position. It appeared as though he went into a stupor. The people attending the royal court could see that the King was petrified. The ministers and the army in charge were certain that the King had turned into a statue. They were anxious about the King; yet incredibly none of them were able to utter even a word. Their heads became dull and non-responsive.

Everyone in the royal assembly remained motionless. About a hundred minutes passed in that state. Slowly the King got back his wits. But he was still unsteady. He almost fell off his throne. His body guards quickly held him from falling. It took a while for the King to gather himself. Finally, he asked in a confused and low voice, "What is this meeting about? Who are all these people? Where am I now?"

His ministers, however, recovered fully by that time. They were surprised at the plight of the King. They addressed him in a consoling tone, "Your Majesty! By the grace of God, all's well. We were all worried about you. How come you look a bit lost? You seem to have forgotten yourself. Please compose yourself. This sort of a sorry state is very unbecoming of a valorous person like you."

The King had recovered fully by then and was back as his usual self. He laughed heartily and looked appreciatively at the magician. The king said :

King: (Addressing the Magician) Dear Magician! Congratulations. You have admirable powers of magic. I am generally known to be a very strong-minded person. But you could hypnotize me! You created such a dangerous situation around me that I felt and looked miserable.

(Now addressing the Nobility attending the court): Gentlemen! Once King Bali caught Lord Indra as a prisoner during a war between the gods and demons. He was transporting Indra to his homeland. But Indra, with his magical powers, created an illusory army while they were on the move and attacked King Bali. King Bali was flummoxed and prayed to Brahma to save him. Brahma appeared before King Bali. However, Indra in his subtle form stopped Brahma and prayed to him to save him and other gods. Being unable to decide the course of action, Brahma went blank in his mind for a short period of time. I found myself in a similar situation.

Vasishta: On listening to the above explanation of the King, all those present in the court felt relieved. At the same time, they were also curious to know about the scary experience that the King had. On their request, the King told the following story.

90. The Illusory Tribal World

King: (Continuing his address to the audience in the court): You had all seen the magician and the horse entering the court. I remember the magician waving his wand of peacock feathers. After that neither the court nor any of you here were in my mind.

I was so fascinated by that horse that I went riding it as a dauntless knight. I reached a thick forest with many wild beasts. Looking at the game and having a capable horse on hand, my enthusiasm for hunting knew no bounds. I was so infatuated with hunting that I went after the animals without a break till both myself and the horse were totally exhausted.

It was hot midsummer. The blazing Sun was directly over the head. Blistering winds were blowing across. My throat was parched. The horse and I were dead tired and thirsty. I wandered around looking for water. As I was riding below a large tree covered by many creepers, I was caught up in the mesh of vines hanging from its branch above. I was dangling in the air for some time. I do not know from where the horse got so much energy after being relieved of my weight, it ran away like a flash of lightning, not to be found again anywhere.

I thought that I would die as the grip of the creepers got tightened around my neck. But the creepers broke due to my weight and I fell down with a thud. Under the impact of that fall, I went to sleep. By the time I woke up, it was quite dark. I felt very lonely in that terrifying forest. The night was advancing. There was no scope for my evening bath and ablutions. There was not even a drop of water to wet my dry mouth. I was totally helpless and did not know what to do. With great difficulty I managed to get into the hollow of a tree and spent the night there. It was early dawn the next morning. The thirst had reduced but I was very weak. I searched around to see if I could get some fruit. Since it was summer, I did not find any fruit. There was no trace of any human beings around.

I gave up all hope of living. I resigned myself to die. Then I found a beautiful tribal woman, carrying a pot of rice. She was dipping her hand into the pot and eating from it as she walked. I did not have the strength to shout for her. I was unable to even utter a word. With great difficulty I reached her and begged for food in sign language.

She had nothing more than a couple of rags covering her. In contrast, I was attired in royal clothes. It could be my pitiable looks or whatever, she refused to give me any food. She laughed at me and ran away. On one hand I was reconciled to losing my life. On the other hand I was hoping against hope to survive. In spite of my confused state, I was tormented by her beauty, giggles and chuckles. Having no other go, I followed her, begged her and pleaded for food. The tribal girl did not totally desert me. She was running away from me but teasing me with occasional stops and smiles looking at me. She taunted me by saying that she was a poor tribal girl whereas I was a King and she was not fit for me.

I understood that she also felt attracted to me. When I promised her that I would abide by all her conditions, she gave me food, keeping half of it for her father, who was working in the fields.

I felt a bit relieved after taking the food. With that, my desire for her increased. She went to her fields and brought her father. The three of us walked to their hamlet.

I found out there that they ate raw meat and drank fresh blood. The place was very filthy. Everywhere there was squalor and dirt with all sorts of critters like ants crawling all over and the hum of mosquitoes. Yet the villagers treated me with honor. They played drums and distributed liquor. They married the girl to me with much gaiety. The celebrations went on for a week. During that period my royal dress was gone. I wore tribal clothes. I was not aware how and when the clothes changed.

Time flew by. Soon it was a year. A daughter was born to us. I lived with my in-laws, attended agricultural work with them and got accustomed to their way of living and eating hogs and porcupines.

In course of time I developed some differences with my in-laws. Both my wife and I moved out. We had many children. In spite of both of us working very hard, we were not able to look after the kids properly.

Because of poverty we used to quarrel often. Finally we separated. I lived with a friend with some of our children. We reconciled later and lived together again. It happened like that many times. Over a period of time, I spoke like them vulgarly, performed evil deeds, and ate dirty food.

Sixty years of my life were spent like that. I became too old. At that time a severe famine visited us. It was a time of no holds barred struggle for survival. Humaneness lost its value. Relationships within the tribe worsened. People were killing one another for food.

Many people left the village and migrated to other places. We had small children even at that advanced age. We also moved out of the village. I carried my youngest child on my shoulder. My wife and children followed me. On our way, we rested for a while under a tree.

In spite of the wretched condition we were in, my wife was never disturbed. She was not worried about the children. She ate some dry leaves and chewed a few rocks to mitigate her hunger and slept happily. I could never sleep. I tried to cajole my starving children who were asking for meat and blood. They were incessantly crying with hunger. At last, in desperation, I asked them to eat the meat out of my body. They were ready to do so.

My love for my kids peaked. I thought that my flesh could be eaten by my children if I died. I gathered some dry wood, lit a pyre and jumped into it. There I jumped into the fire and here I was about to fall from my throne. Hearing your loud cheers, I came back into this world freed from my stupor. This wonderful spell of magic was cast by the magician here. We have to honor him for the inimitable trick. Let us felicitate him.

No sooner King Lavana completed his narration with those words, the magician disappeared. The entire court was astounded. The elders present there said:

Elders: Your Majesty! Ordinary Magicians exhibit their skill for the sake of gifts and fame. But the magician here disappeared when you spoke of felicitation. It appears that he is not a usual magician. Perchance, God Himself wished to teach you about the true nature of the world and so he manifested as a magician.

It is evident to all of us that the entire world is nothing but a play of the mind. It is all mind only.

मनोविलासः संसार इति यस्यां प्रतीयते ।
सर्वशक्तेरनन्तस्य विलासो हि मनोजगत् ।।

manovilāsaḥ saṃsāra iti yasyāṃ pratīyate |
sarvaśakteranantasya vilāso hi manojagat ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 109, Sloka 25

The world is for the pleasure of the mind - The world is nothing but the mind of that ever-powerful Hiranyagarbha.

So, Your Majesty, the magician must be a divine teacher, not an ordinary juggler.

91. Conquering the Mind

Vasishta: (Continuing his sermon after completing the story of Lavana):

Rama! It is not a story concocted by me. I was present in King Lavana's court when it happened. I myself saw everything. The story did not end there. There is a lot more to be told. But let me first explain to you in progressive steps the meaning behind the story.

1. When the mind is covered by ignorance, it runs after sensual pleasures.
2. Under the influence of the past impressions stored in it, the mind can create fear where there is no occasion for fear. It can generate pleasure in places which should be feared. In short, the mind can show you dreams in your awake state.
3. If it so desires, the mind can show you things even in the absence of light. Events taking place at far off places can be shown by the mind as if happening right in front of you.
4. When the mind does not want to, you will not be able to see the things present in blazing light right before your eyes.
5. The mind can project other's experiences as your own.
6. It can make you forget the events that happened. It can show things that never happened as if they did.
7. The sense organs and the mind complement each other during the awake state. The mind acts independently during the dream state without any assistance from the sense organs. So the mind is more powerful than the sense organs.
8. If the mind desires, it can show strange sights in one's awake state itself without going into a dream. The experiences of King Lavana with tribals was such a one.
9. Mind can give the experiences of life in Heaven or Hell without actually being born.
10. Emperor Harischandra experienced a life of 12 years within one night. King Indradyumna experienced one entire Yuga (an epoch) within a single moment. All such things could happen because of the power of mind.

Rama! I am speaking so much about the mind because I would like to impress upon you that 'conquering the mind is to conquer the entire world.' It's enough for the thread in a garland of beads to break at any point for all the beads to fall down. The mind is the thread and the sense organs are the beads. If a place for the sensual pleasures is not allowed in the mind, that mind eventually calms down. That is to say, it attains tranquillity. I shall now tell you about conquering the mind.

1. The mind is conquered when one stops thinking about objects of pleasure. To stay thoughtless is the first step in the control of the mind and the doorway for liberation.
2. When Pure Consciousness is in contact with *māyā*, a vibration (movement) takes place. That motive power is the mind. If there is no motion, there cannot be a mind.
3. Just as a King can be defeated by a King only, the mind can be vanquished with mind only. There is no other way.
4. There is a sequence of steps to follow in order to conquer the mind.

भोगौघवासनां त्यक्त्वा त्यज त्वं भेदवासनाम् ।
भावाभावौ ततस्त्यक्त्वा निर्विकल्पःसुखीभव ।।

bhogaughavāsanāṃ tyaktvā tyaja tvaṃ bhedavāsanām |
bhāvābhāvau tatastyaktvā nirvikalpaḥsukhībhava ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 112, Sloka 23

i) Drop the impressions (*vāsana-s,* tendencies) that propel you to seek pleasure.
ii) Shun the impressions that evoke differences.
iii) Abjure all knowledge about the mind that can be known by the mind.
iv) Give up all forms of thought (*vikalpa*).

Implementation of the above steps leads to the annihilation of the mind and ignorance.

Rama: (After listening carefully to the teaching by the Sage): Sir! Will the effort to annihilate the mind achieve annihilation of ignorance also or will it require a separate effort?

Vasishta: Both efforts should be made simultaneously. Acquiring the Self-Knowledge is the only direct means for the annihilation of ignorance.

इच्छामात्रमविद्येह तन्नाशो मोक्ष उच्यते । स चासंकल्पमात्रेण सिद्धो भवति राघव ।।

icchāmātramavidyeha tannāśo mokṣa ucyate |
sa cāsaṃkalpamātreṇa siddho bhavati rāghava ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 114, Sloka 7

Desire is ignorance. To get rid of it is liberation. The means for it is to disown thoughts.

Rama: You say that 'Self-Knowledge' is the direct means for the annihilation of ignorance. What is the intrinsic nature of Self?

Vasishta: The all-pervading immanent Consciousness is the Self. Bondage is to think that 'I am not that all pervading Consciousness (*brahman*).' Knowing 'I am *brahman*' is liberation. If I am not *brahman*, I should say that I am not able to know who I am. But ignorance does not allow me to say that. Ignorance will make us claim that 'I am the body, I am the experiencer of pain and pleasure.'

For example, as we discussed previously, it is ignorance that makes us say that the sky is dark when we are not able to see the remote space during the night instead of admitting our inability to see. So we have to make every effort to conquer ignorance. Eradicating the impressions is the only way for that.

Rama: What are the impressions (*vāsana-s*)?

Vasishta: Factors that generate desires which bind us are the impressions.

May you, Rama, conquer the impressions, be committed to Self-inquiry and get liberated !

92. Continuation of Lavana's Story

Rama: Sir ! I have four additional questions.

1. Is it the body or the Self that is the experiencer of the result of the action?
2. Will you please elaborate on the nature of illusion?
3. Why did King Lavana, who was a righteous person, have to go through the sorrowful experience?
4. What happened to the magician at the end?

Vasishta: I will explain first about the experiencer of the results of action.

1. The mind that is identified with the Consciousness-space (*cidākāsa*) is the experiencer.
2. Doership and experiencership are the intrinsic properties of *māyā*.

The answers for the other two questions of yours are contained in the remaining part of Lavana's story. So please listen.

Rama! King Lavana belonged to your dynasty. His grandfather's name was Harischandra, a very capable King. He performed the sacrificial ritual *rājasūya*. King Lavana was not as competent as his grandfather. Nevertheless, he had a desire to perform the *rājasūya*. The ritual had to be performed after defeating all the Kings on the earth, making them his subordinates. It was beyond his ability. So he searched for other ways to perform the *rājasūya* ritual. He found out that the same fruits accrue if the ritual was done even mentally. He wanted to adopt the mental route.

Lavana assigned the affairs of his Kingdom to his ministers, sequestered himself for a year, and completed the ritual mentally with utmost concentration and devotion. He gave away his Kingdom as a gift to the priests, of course mentally only. After completion of all the formalities, he returned to his duties as the ruler. The incident with the magician took place sometime after he returned to power.

The nobles present in the court inquired from me the reason for such a sorrowful experience to the King. I used my powers of clairvoyance to find out the reason. What I told them was on the following lines:

Vasishta: (Addressing the Nobles in the court of Lavana): Respectful Sirs! Your King performed an uninterrupted *rājasūya* mentally for one year. As per the scriptures the performer of the ritual would undergo severe difficulties for twelve years. Since, the King carried out the ritual mentally, he had to experience the resultant difficulties also mentally. In order to fulfil this requirement, Lord Indra sent his messenger in the guise of a magician. That is why the magician disappeared as soon as the King had gone through the miserable experience."

Vasishta: (Now addressing Rama): Your third and fourth questions are answered with the above explanation. Before I continue with the remaining part of the story of Lavana, I shall explicate the philosophical significance of the various incidents for your sake.

As I said earlier, the mind is the agent (doer) for all actions. The mind is also the experiencer of the consequences of the actions. The incidents in the story of Lavana corroborate the statement. The agent for the actions of Lavana for sixty years of his life was his mind. It is his mind that experienced the resultant joys and sorrows.

One, who is desirous of controlling his mind, has to sharpen it through Hatha yoga. It then has to be cleansed with Raja yoga. Ultimately it has to be dissolved in a deep thoughtless state of meditation (*nirvikalpa samādhi*). This is the way to acquire Self- Knowledge.

[Note: Sage Valmiki used prose for a part of the 116th sarga. The rest of the sarga is in verse.]

93. Intrinsic Nature - some Definitions

Vasishta: Rama! There are seven steps to obtain Self-Knowledge. There are seven stages in the state of ignorance also. The seven stages in the state of ignorance are like the lower worlds. The seven steps to obtain true Knowledge are like the higher worlds.

Let us first consider the seven stages in the state of ignorance. It is essential to know the locus of ignorance before we proceed any further. The locus of ignorance is the intrinsic nature of the Self itself. But what exactly is 'intrinsic nature'?

I will give you three definitions for 'intrinsic nature.' The first definition is:

अर्थादर्थान्तरं चित्ते याति मध्ये हि या स्थितिः ।
निरस्तमनना यासौ स्वरूपस्थितिरुच्यते ।।

arthādarthāntaraṃ citte yāti madhye hi yā sthitiḥ |
nirastamananā yāsau svarūpasthitirucyate ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 117, Sloka 8

When two fingers are apart, there is space in between them.

Suppose there are two adjacent thoughts separated by a short distance. In other words, say that a thought in the mind moved from one object to another. What is present in between the two thoughts? There is no space, no fire, no wind, no water, and no earth, i.e. none of the five fundamental elements were present in-between the two thoughts. Then what is it that is present there? If you say that there is nothing in between, how could you then know that these two thoughts are separate?

What is present in-between cannot be another thought. If it were to be another thought, there should be an object as its content. Then only it's possible to know it to be a thought. Nobody has such an experience. Hence, there is none other than the "I," the agent of the thought, between two adjacent thoughts.

The true intrinsic nature of "I", like in the above example, is that pure beingness unrelated to any substance or even to a thought. You may recall how *cidākāśa* or consciousness-space was defined in the story of Leela.

Saraswati said at that time as follows:

देशाद्देशान्तरप्राप्तौ संविदो मध्यमेव यत् ।
निमिषेण चिदाकाशं तद्विद्धि वरवर्णिनि ।।

deśāddeśāntaraprāptau saṃvido madhyameva yat |
nimiṣeṇa cidākāśaṃ tadviddhi varavarṇini ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 17, Sloka 12

samvit means a thought wave. It is the mind. Let us say that first the thought of 'pot' has come to mind. Then another thought of 'tree' occurred. How much time is required for the 'thought wave' to move from the pot to the tree? Only a fraction of a second. Here, a fraction of a second means very little or a miniscule amount of time. What is present in the time when the 'thought' is moving from the pot to the tree? We cannot say that there is an ordinary space between two thoughts, for the space of the world cannot be present in the midst of mind.

Observe the similarities in the two definitions. From this, we can infer that the Consciousness-space is the true intrinsic nature of one's Self.

Rama! Now listen to the second definition.

संशान्तसर्वसंकल्पा या शिलान्तरिव स्थितिः ।
जाड्यनिद्राविनिर्मुक्ता सा स्वरूपस्थितिः स्मृता ।।

saṃśāntasarvasaṃkalpā yā śilāntariva sthitiḥ |
jāḍyanidrāvinirmuktā sā svarūpasthitiḥ smṛtā ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 117, Sloka 9

There are no intentions. The situation appears like a statue carved out of a single stone. But it is neither unconsciousness nor sleep. It is not an inert state. That is the true intrinsic nature of one's Self.

Rama! The first definition for the true nature of the Self is based on the thought wave. The second definition is based on dropping reference to thought waves. The third definition is based on dropping me-ness (*ahamvṛitti*) as follows:

अहंतांशे क्षते शान्ते भेदे निःस्पन्दतां गते ।
अजडा या प्रकचति तत्स्वरूपमिति स्थितम् ।।

ahaṃtāṃśe kṣate śānte bhede niḥspandatāṃ gate |
ajaḍā yā prakacati tatsvarūpamiti sthitam ||

Utpatti Prakarana, Sarga 117, Sloka 10

The idea of 'I-consciousness' (a 'me') being present internally should be sublated. The external 'you-me' distinction should disappear. The movement of the mind should end both inside and outside. Then the self-effulgent Consciousness blossoms. That itself is the true intrinsic nature of the Self.

94. Stages in Ignorance

Vasishta: Rama! The true intrinsic nature of Self is covered by the superimposition of ignorance. It is like a snake on a rope.

There are seven stages in the state of ignorance.

1. Wakeful state in seed form (*bīja jāgrat*)
2. Wakeful state *(jāgrat)*
3. Wakeful state due to impressions (*mahā jāgrat*)
4. Awake dream state (*jāgrat-swapna*)
5. Dream state (*swapna*)
6. Dream awake state (*swapna jāgrat*)
7. Deep sleep (*suṣupti*)

Wakeful state in seed form: This is the seed state of ignorance causal for the wakeful state at the collective as well as at the individual level in the process of creation. It is the first unreal form of consciousness when Consciousness comes in contact with *māyā.* So it can be said that it is the first unreal state projected from the Pure Consciousness.

Wakeful state: This stage comprises the thought or knowledge that 'I am the gross body. These are the things to be experienced by me. I am the owner.' Such thoughts occur only in the wakeful state.

Wakeful state due to Impressions: The thoughts of ownership and doership ('Me and Mine') exist in every individual. If such thoughts get entrenched over several births and strongly manifest in the current birth also, it represents the 3rd stage.

If one has strong conviction since childhood that he is a bold adventurer, while none else in his family has such feeling, his belief must have come from the strong impressions in his mind from past births. Such a state of strong belief is 'Wakeful state due to Impressions.'

The states 1-3 above are based on a comparison of their manifestation in the wakeful state.

Awake dream state: The mind sometimes shows dream-like situations in the awake state. For example: snake over the rope, mirages, two moons in the sky etc. It may occur due to defective sense organs or mistakes in the perception or some other reason.

Dream state: This is the stage when an object is experienced by a finite individual without the help of any sense organs. Yogis say that this state exists in the space between the throat and heart within the gross body.

Dream awake state: Because of deep love or attachment or mentation, a dream-like experience stays in one's mind for a considerably long time. The ignorance that causes such a state in one's mind is called a dream-awake state. It means he stays awake but in a dreamy state for long periods. For example: King Harischandra experienced 12 years of life in one night. Similarly, King Lavana experienced 60 years of life in about an hour and forty minutes.

The three states 4-6 are described based on their similarity to the dream state. The states 4 and 6 differ in the duration and the quality of experience.

Deep Sleep: The six states described so far arise to facilitate experiencing the effects of past actions. When all the previous effects are expended through experiencing and new effects are yet to arise, there lies a deep sleep like state. During that stage, both the gross and subtle worlds are dissolved and only ignorance and its substrate (*brahman*) remain.

The impressions which will trigger the future joys and sorrows exist in this stage in a dormant condition. The finite individual remains in an inert condition in this stage.

Rama! One may conceive of further divisions in the above stages. If you conduct the Self-inquiry based on these stages, it will be easy to transcend them. I shall now tell you the seven stages on the Knowledge Path.

95. Seven stages on the Knowledge Path

Vasishta: (Continuing): The seven stages on the Knowledge Path are:

1. Desire for Enlightenment (*subhecca*).
2. Inquiry into Truth (*vicāraṇa*).
3. Tenuous Mind (*tanumānasa*).
4. Realization (*satvāpatti*).
5. Non-attachment (*asamsakti*).
6. Non-perception of Objects (*padārdha abhāvana*).
7. Ineffability (*turyaga*).

Desire for Enlightenment (*subhecca*): It signifies a noble intention and the beginning of the journey on the Knowledge Path. The seeker will have an inclination to reject materialistic desires. He wishes for detachment. He understands that he has been ignorant and develops interest in Self- inquiry and desires the association with noble people.

Inquiry into Truth (*vicāraṇa*): Following up on wishing, the seeker takes up listening to scriptures and reflects on what is heard in this stage. Detachment and association with noble people along with listening to the scriptures are a must in this stage. One should be resolute in his pursuit

Tenuous Mind (*tanumānasa*): '*mānasa'* means desire or fondness. '*tanu'* means a little. Diminishing desires is a feature of this stage. The decrease should occur as a result of the practice of the first two states but not due to other reasons. If one continues to have a desire for experiencing materialistic pleasures, even after cultivating detachment, it will not help on the Knowledge Path.

Realization (*satvāpatti*): '*satvam*' means the Supreme Self. '*āpatti*' means attainment. Through the constant practice of the first three states, if one attains a thoughtless state, then, that state is called Realization or *satvāpatti*. One needs to put in effort to get into a thoughtless state. Then only his efforts to attain realization will fructify.

Non-attachment (*asamsakti*): In this stage, the practitioner remains unaware of the external things not only during thoughtless deep meditation but also at other times. His thoughts on *Brahman* remain constant. One who attains this state is called '*brahmavidwara*.'

Non-perception of Objects (*padārdha abhāvana*): The seeker in this stage will not in general think of worldly objects or affairs. He remains constantly as the true Self and becomes aware of the external world only on an inducement by others. The seeker who attains this state is called as '*brahmavidvarīyaān*.'

Ineffability (*turyaga*): The seeker after much practice of the sixth state eventually stops responding to the inducement of others and continues to abide as *brahman*. He remains uninterruptedly in that state. This state is also called *jīvanmuktāvastha or turīyāvastha*. The seeker in this state is called '*brahmavidvariṣṭha.*'

It is very difficult to differentiate between the 6th and 7th states. The seeker in the sixth state will be putting in at least a limited effort to look after his body whereas the one in the 7th state will not do even that. Beyond this state is *videha kaivalya* – the seeker leaves the body and remains eternally as *brahman*.

Rama: What do the seekers in the 7th state do when they do not even bother to look after their bodies? How do they live? Will they behave as they please without restraint?

Vasishta: Rama! They will never do so even by mistake. They do not have any interest in the duties and responsibilities of the stage of their life (the four *Ashrama-s*). But by force of habit attained due to the previous practices, their bodies continue to observe whatever they were habituated to. Even if a mistake is committed, they will rectify it as per the directions of the scriptures. They will never act as they please. In this context, there is an adage:

विदितब्रह्मतत्त्वस्य यथेष्टाचरणं यदि |
शुनां तत्त्वविदां चैव को भेदोऽशुचिभक्षणे ||

viditabrahmatattvasya yatheṣṭācaraṇaṃ yadi |
śunāṃ tattvavidāṃ caiva ko bhedo'śucibhakṣaṇe ||

(quoted by the commentator) Sarga 118, Sloka 19

If it is said that the realized individuals behave as they please, does it mean that there is no difference between them and the dogs on the street? Does it not amount to saying that they also eat unclean food like dogs?

Rama, the seekers in the 7th state will not act as they wish. They go about without interest in anything. Nothing in the world affects them because they are forever as the true Self. The seven states on the Knowledge Path come to only virtuous human beings and not to animals, plants or persons of a mean nature.

An important point has to be mentioned here. For whatever reason, if anyone is born in a non-virtuous environment but achieves the 7th state, he will definitely attain liberation. Such individuals should always be respected. Karkati is a perfect example for this. Moreover, all the seven states may not be attained within the duration of one birth. Only exceptional individuals like Sanaka, Sananda etc had attained the 7th state right from birth. Others obtain in accordance with their efforts in one or more births.

96. 'I-consciousness' is like the ring

Vasishta: Who is the seeker? The seeker is the finite individual. Who is the finite individual? It is *Brahman* only. Does *Brahman* have to go in search of freedom from sorrow? The answer is a clear 'yes.'

A lump of gold, it is said, was very sad after being converted into a ring. It regretted it was now a ring and not the earlier lump of gold. The state of *brahman* too is akin to that. He forgot his ever blissful form and created a limited ego for himself, got entangled in misery, followed the practices as per the seven steps on the Knowledge Path and finally was back again in His pristine blissful state. That's the way it happens!

Rama: Teacher! The piece of gold got the impression 'I am a ring' because somebody made it into that shape. But how did *brahman* become a finite individual with the idea of me-ness (*ahaṃ sphuraṇa*)?

Vasishta: Rama! You may think that what you have asked is a very complex question. You expect that an agent (a doer - *karta*) should be there for an action like the goldsmith for creating a ring. So you begin to wonder who carved out the finite individual from *Brahman*.

Questions of the type like "When is a thing born? How was it born? When will it go? How will it go?" can be asked about a thing if it were to really exist. If a thing that doesn't exist at all, there is no scope for anybody to raise such questions. Everyone will agree on this.

The ring or the thought wave of 'I am' ('me-ness') are not entities that do really exist. Suppose you take the golden ring and ask a banker to evaluate it. He will estimate the value based on the fact that it is gold and not because of its shape as a ring. He estimates it as gold because there is gold actually, and not because he imagined gold to be present where there was none. Therefore, what is really present in the ring is gold. The ring-form is a creation. The ringness is not a 'thing' having any reality to it. The goldsmith is the agent for the non-existing form only. Whether the form of a ring is present or not, what is, is gold only and there is no 'doer' for the gold. The thought wave of 'I am' is also similar to the ring. It has no existence. What truly exists there is the ever blissful Supreme Self.

Rama: Sir, you are establishing that what is present in the ring is gold through the mechanism of evaluation. Then what is the significance of the word 'ring'? When it is, say, as a nugget, we don't call it a ring. We give the name ring only later on. When we call it a ring, what exactly is being called as the 'ring'?

Vasishta: Rama! We use many words. We speak of the 'son of a barren woman.' Can you tell me about his form, his features etc.? You cannot. Why so? Because his form is only notional, it is an imaginary form, a *mithya* form, *mAyA* form or a non-existent form. What do all these words mean?

As soon as we give a label like 'son of a barren woman,' we assume a meaning to it and coin more words without properly inquiring into its meaning. If you step back a little to consider that there cannot be a son to a barren woman, the meaning to all the extra words that are said of him like *mithya* form, *mAyA* form etc. also mean nothing. How can you use the same terminology that was used prior to a proper inquiry, even during the process of inquiry?

There is form in a mirage. The second moon seen due to defective vision has a form. The silver seen in nacre has a form. The form of 'I-consciousness' is no different from any of these examples. All these forms are seen in ignorance. No trace of them exists on acquiring Self-Knowledge. So clearly I-consciousness is non-existent.

But paradoxically it works as if it exists, even though it is non-existent. The reason for it is not its own beingness. It is the imaginative power of the seer. The power of imagination can change even poison to nectar. Hence, there is nothing else other than the ever blissful Supreme Self.

Rama: Revered Teacher! With enlightenment all the illusory objects should disappear. I am enlightened by your teaching. Now that I am enlightened, the entire illusory world that is seen in front of me should disappear. But why is it still visible?

Vasishta: Rama! Ignorance should be destroyed along with its root cause. In other words, it should be destroyed along with the impressions present in the mind. Then only, the illusory appearance of the world will end. Till that happens, ignorance keeps showing its prowess. The balance part of the story of Lavana illustrates the point.

97. Story of Lavana - Part-3

Vasishta: Rama! King Lavana could not forget even by the next day his strange experiences of the previous day when he was under the spell of the magic. He was repeatedly haunted by the memories of the forest, the tribal village and its inhabitants. He remembered that the place was near the Vindhya Mountains range. He decided to go to Vidhyan Mountains and search for the tribal village where he spent his imaginary life.

The mountain range was a very vast area. Highly dense forests with fierce wild animals covered the area. It was clearly dangerous to go there. However, using his royal powers, he organized an expedition to the area in search of his dream village. He was accompanied by a large entourage in the expedition.

Surprise! Surprise! After an intense search, a few tribal people of that village were encountered. The King's party could locate the tribal village with some of the same persons and sites where the King spent his magical life of sixty years.

The King even found his old mother-in-law. She was in tears. He went to her and asked her the reasons for her sorrow. She was still crying for her dead daughter and son-in-law. In the midst of her sobs, she recounted the entire story. In the end, she said that the prince who married her daughter and the daughter committed suicide, as they could not live under the severe conditions of the famine.

The story she told – including the names, time etc. – matched with the experiences of King Lavana. The King and his ministers were stunned beyond words at the exact similitude of the story. It took a while for the King to recover from the shock. He presented the tribal people many gifts, made arrangements for the redemption of the famine conditions and returned to his capital.

After a few days, the King asked me as follows: 'Maharishi! How could the events seen in my dream due to that magic be found in the world?' I replied to him at that moment and he was satisfied.

Rama: Teacher! The last part of the story sounds very incredulous. It looks to me to be a pure fabrication.

Vasishta: Rama! I expected that you would have guessed the salience of the story. I skipped telling you my reply to King Lavana for that reason.

I explained to you previously the deceptive powers of the mind. You have the clue in that discourse for the happenings in the story of Lavana. I shall tell you again about the illusive play of the mind.

There is nothing impossible for *māyā* to do. Kings may be turned into dust or a pauper in rags may be made an emperor. It has got two great weapons – memory and forgetfulness. It is not unusual for people to forget whatever actually happens. They may recall it after sometime – a common experience to all. Whatever it is, there is no way for anyone to dictate how *māyā* should behave. *māyā* can create even false memories – bringing to the mind as memory something that had never happened.

Just as it is possible to forget an experience, it is possible for *māyā* to bring to your memory an event as though it was there in your past even if it never happened! For example, one may feel that he kept some money in a box and keep searching for it, though he did not keep the money there. He opens the box and finds no money. We often come across such misers who suspect their wives for stealing the money rather than doubting their memory.

There is nothing to wonder if one is able to remember one's own experience. But *māyā* can make the experience stored in one mind to appear as memory in another mind. In other words, a person feels in his memory that he had had an actual experience of an event though it was only an imagined event. This is not the usual type of remembrance. It is due to the play of *māyā.*

Normally, an imagination is private to each person. But it is not a rule that it has to be so always. Some illusions can simultaneously occur in the minds of many people. For example, a magician shows a single magic trick. But many can see it at the same time during his show.

Sometimes, two people, who are far away from each other, can imagine the same way. For example, two poets, each sitting in a different town, may compose verses using similar words in reply to a problem posed to them. Clearly *māyā* cast the influence of some special powers on King Lavana to create the experience.

The tribal village was a common illusion appearing to all the people belonging to that tribe. A prince happened to enter that village and married a woman. Later, he committed suicide. That was all the life experience of that prince. King Lavana remembered that prince's experience as if it was his own memory. Just as an immature Yogi thinks of some other's past birth as his own, King Lavana remembered some other's experience as his own. Lord Indra's messenger was responsible for creating this false impression in Lavana's mind through his power of magic.

Dreams and recollecting a past experience resemble as well as differ from one another in many aspects. Remembrance brings an old incident to experience, but the names, forms etc. will not be clear in that experience.

Dreams show the forms etc. clearly but do not show the past event in the exact way it happened. Magic is in between these two. Magic shows the figures as in a dream and the incidents as in a recollection. Magic may also cause very strange experiences that were never even imagined or heard.

King Lavana experienced in his mind through the magician's trick certain past events which were not actually his. Therefore, he was not able to make sense of that experience. But the events did happen in some other person's life. Hence he did find that specific tribal village and other evidence on the ground. But the false impression that 'I-am-that-prince-who-married-the- tribal-girl' got implanted in his mind. That is why he could feel the joys and sorrows experienced by that prince as if they were his own.

I narrated the story of Lavana to demonstrate that what appears to you as the world is a trick of the mind and that complete annihilation of the mind is the only way to experience the Supreme Self. You should therefore carefully examine the nature of the mind.

The following points may help as clues:

1. The apparent world is the creation of mind.
2. Mind is a vibration (movement) that occurs in Pure Consciousness due to Its contact with *māyā* (illusion).
3. The substratum for the mind is Consciousness.
4. The substratum for the world is also Consciousness.
5. Do not get attached to any percept in the world.
6. The mind is also one of the objects perceived by you. So never should you develop attachment to it. Consider the mind to be a relative who migrated to a distant place. Think of it as a worthless inert thing like a stone.

7. The best thing to do is to consider that the mind is a non-entity, it is not there at all. Or recognize the mind to be an object, which appears to be existent, though it does not really exist. Latch on to any of one of these alternatives.
8. A seeker needs a purified mind. Acting without desire for the fruits is the way to purify the mind. You have a pure mind already because you completed that part in your previous birth itself.
9. Next you should associate yourself with noble people and study the scriptures. You are doing both of these now.
10. One who has the company of noble people and studies the scriptures will be able to take the first step on the Knowledge Path viz. *subhecca* (yearning for liberation) with a little bit of effort.
11. Try to follow the seven steps of Knowledge Path I described to you earlier. The seventh step is the most significant one.
12. Once you attain the seventh state, you may either enter into a thoughtless *samādhi* state or attend to the worldly affairs with compassion. Either way it makes no difference. Joys and sorrows will not touch you.

Rama! I illustratively proved to you what it means to say that a world is created. I established the Supreme Self, *brahman*, is the substratum on which the world is superimposed. I also proved that *brahman* is both the efficient and material cause for the changeless change into a world. The Existence-Consciousness-Infiniteness nature of *Brahman* cannot be directly known. That is why Vedas have proposed *brahman* as the cause for the origination of the world. The scripture holds:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante |

ṭaittariyopaniśad *īī-i-1*

From whom these five fundamental elements are born, it is *brahman*.

Creation, sustenance and dissolution are the incidental or assumed properties of *brahman*. Based on the characteristics of creation, I established in the chapter on creation, that *brahman* was Pure Consciousness (*cinmAtra*), the origination of the world was like a magic trick. I had also demonstrated that space, time and percept were purely imaginary entities and did not have true beingness in this chapter on Creation:

Through the story of Leela, we saw that both location and time do not really exist.

In the story of Sucika, we had seen that the gross bodies resulted from a strong mental resolve by each of the finite individuals.

From the story of Aindava, we could understand that creation of the world was nothing more than the imagination of the collective individual called Hiranyagarbha.

In the story of Mind, I explained about the problems caused by the mind.

In the Children's crazy story, we had seen that the order of creation as revealed in the Vedas and mythologies was like a fabricated story told to children.

Once you fully grasped the imaginary nature of the world, I had once again demonstrated through the story of King Lavana that the creation of the world was no more than a magic-like trick wrought by the mind and that the world had no reality to it.

From these illustrative examples and a critical look at the origination of the world, we could decipher the pure action-less and absolute nature of the Supreme Self.

Here we come to the end of the Chapter on Creation.

Next we shall study the nature of Sustenance of the world.

98. Review of the Chapter on Creation

Real meaty stuff on Non-dual philosophy appears for the first time in this chapter on Creation within the highly revered Advaita text, Yogavasishta. As already noted previously the inquiry into the ultimate Truth is taken up in this book in line with the *taittirīya upaniśad* Mantra

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante |

ṭaittariyopaniśad *III-i-1*

The salient message that emerges from this chapter is that the origin of the world lacks true beingness and hence not real because it can be proved that both space and time lack true beingness . The principle on which Sage Vasishta develops his argument is that, reality-wise, our wakeful world is the same as our dream world for the Creator, Hiranyagarbha. In other words, I have to admit that what I am is a dream character in another individual's dream. However, it is not an easy issue to ingest for us because of our strong belief in our own independent existence.

In order to drive home this counter intuitive truth, Sage Vasishta resorted to several illustrative stories in addition to elaborate discussions. The most significant and the largest story of them all is the Story of Leela. Next comes the story of the lady demon, Karkati.

Other stories that appear in this chapter are that of Aindava, the duo Indra-Ahalya, and a few other minor ones. The chapter finally closes with the story of King Lavana.

The story of Leela extends to 46 cantos (*sarga*-s). It is preceded by a well-knit curtain raiser occupying 14 cantos. The thirteenth *sarga* contains the key message. We had already made a short review of this story within the main text itself. Within his introductory, Sage Vasishta provided a detailed description on the origination of various creatures from Pure Consciousness *Brahman* to the bounded finite individual in a series of progressive steps. The same points are crafted into a story in the story of Leela.

Sage Vasishta usually presents the rationale behind any story that he introduces into the discussions. He reviews the important take home message that the given story tells at the end of the narration of the story. But he weaves the words so cleverly that one feels that the prelude is different from the conclusion. A diligent reader must be able to see the convergence in both. In order to help the reader to appreciate this aspect, he himself explains the significance and meaning of the symbology adopted by him in various stories. But certain things are left to the imagination of the reader. Therefore, we have added our commentary as a separate section in addition to that of the Sage on the story of Leela. We have also amplified the discussions of Leela and Goddess Saraswati pointing out the special twists and turns in their deliberation. The features of the awake world, dream world and imaginative world were compared and contrasted in that section.

The Sage will present again in greater detail the life story of King Sindh, the villain of the piece in the story of Leela, in the last chapter of the text (in the second part of the sixth chapter: Nirvana). However, the Sage does not give any hint about it in this chapter because his principal aim is focused on two aspects:

1. Innumerable infinite universes exist within the core of an atom itself', and.
2. Multiple streams of several unending epochs exist within a moment itself, possible only if the world happens to be a total phantasmagoria. The world is a result of pure mentation. The story of Karkati offers us a clear explanation of the above fact. In this story, an individual acquires within one single life itself three gross bodies – humongous body, an acicular body and again the original humongous body. We have already examined the inner meaning of this in our review at the end of that story. We learnt that the demon Karkati obtained these different bodies based on her mental imagination. When a question was raised on the reliability of the Karkati story, the Sage narrated the story of Aindavas. The Aindavas are ten brothers each of whom became a Creator by the strength of their meditation and austerities and all of them created a series of multiverses at the same time.

Sage Vasishta repeatedly refers to the story of Aindavas in the forthcoming chapters. Though the story is very short, it is given much importance because he wants to establish the unprecedented power of mentation. It is not only the physical bodies, one can create multiples of universes with the power of imagination. The Sage goes a step further and says that the visible world is nothing but the mental imagination of Hiranyagarbha, the Creator.

Immediately following the powerful story of Aindavas, the Sage takes up a contrasting story of two lustful lovers. But the underlying theme remains the same – what a strong resolve in the mind can yield. Because of the power of their desire for an intimate relationship between the two – Ahalya and Indra – they were reborn as a couple several times.

The Sage distinguishes 14 types of limiting adjuncts that explain the differences in the strength of mind among diverse individuals. The intricate and involved logic used by the Sage in the ensuing discussion is presented by us as a chart for easy comprehension. The sum and substance of the teaching by the Sage is that it is adequate if either the impressions are annihilated or the mind is annihilated.

In the above context, the Sage explains in detail the nature of mind by providing 15 facets of it, giving 15 different names and their definitions. He introduces two short children's stories which have a symbolic significance.

As an icing on the cake, the Sage introduced the story of Lavana and narrated it in three separate parts interspersing with intense discussions. A parallel story to that of Lavana will be discussed in the next chapter on Sustenance. He will bring out the various nuances involved in the states of the dream, memory and reality. He closed the Chapter on Origination declaring that the visible world is something like a magic trick, in a way as an intro to the next Chapter on Sustenance.

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